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I don't regret my facelift and tummy tuck



INSIDE TIMES2



Will I get a Michelin star again? Skye Gyngell

Hunt bristles at Biden's 'massively distortive' green subsidies

Steven Swinford Political Editor

Jeremy Hunt has accused President Biden of leading a "distortive" global subsidy race with his $400 billion green investment package.

Writing in The Times, the chancellor warns against protectionism and says Britain will not go "toe to toe" with the US and EU by offering billions in green subsidies and tax breaks. The UK would instead focus on incentivising private investment and a "pro-growth regulatory regime". Hunt is working on plans, to be announced in his autumn statement, to ensure the UK is competitive.

The government fears that the £4.3 billion car export market to the US could be destroyed because Washington plans to subsidise companies investing in net-zero products made in the US but not those from Britain.

Hunt says: "We are not going toe-to-toe with our friends and allies in some distortive global subsidy race. With the threat of protectionism … the long-term solution is not subsidy but security."

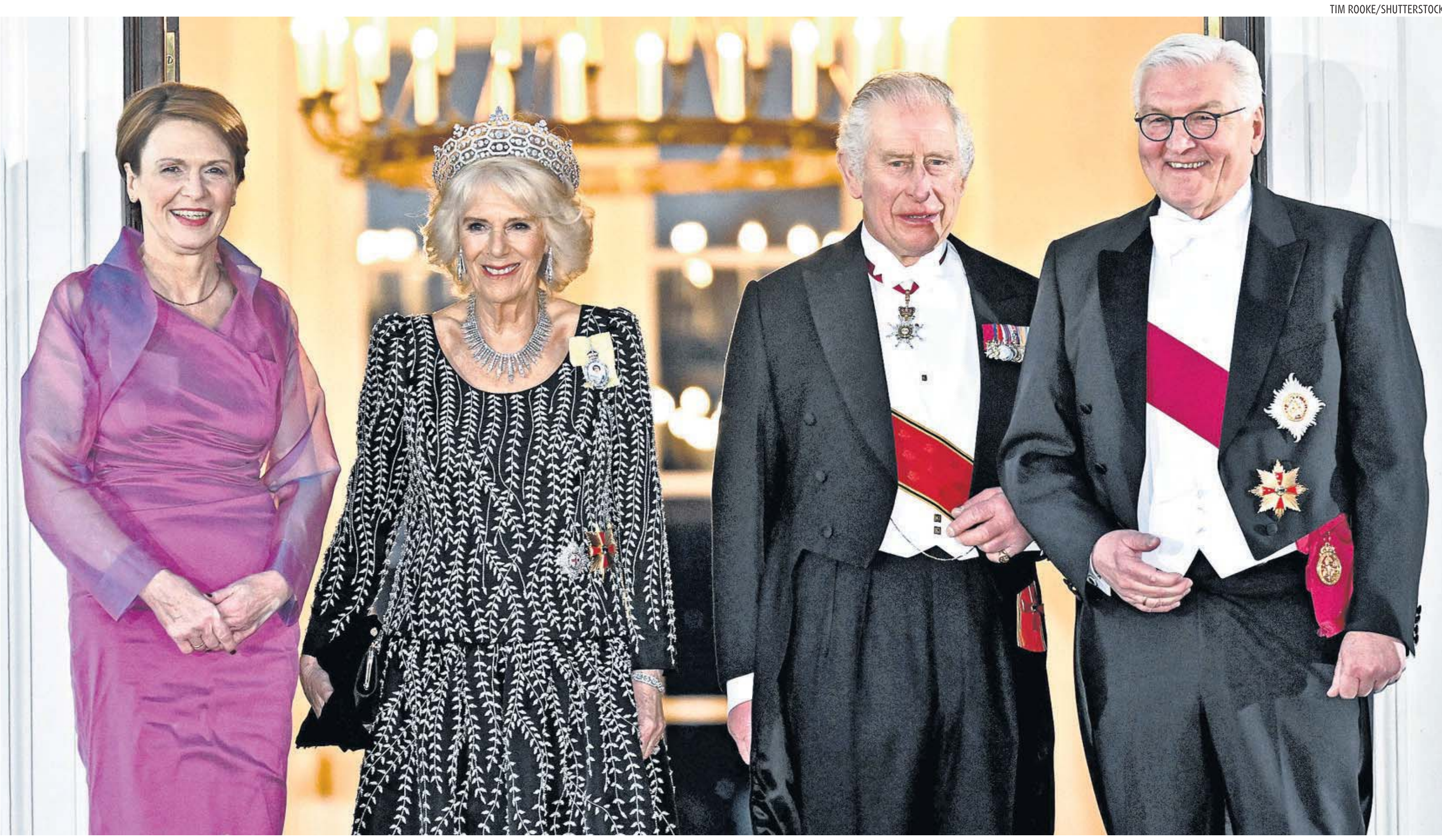
Ministers will seek to "leverage billions in private capital", including from pension funds. "In a sense, this is 'the British way'," he writes, "not massively distortive subsidies, but fantastic science, innovation-rich companies, and a pro-growth regulatory regime powered by private capital from our global financial centre."

Rishi Sunak has publicly refrained from directly criticising Biden's Inflation Reduction Act. He welcomed it this month but he acknowledged concerns about its impact. Labour has pledged to match the US subsidy and accused Hunt of wasting time by waiting until autumn to announce Britain's response.

Grant Shapps, the energy security secretary, will disclose plans today to speed up planning permission for solar and offshore wind farms.

We must invest in our independence, Jeremy Hunt, page 8

TIM ROOKE/SHUTTERSTOCK



Dressed for dinner The King and Queen attended a state banquet hosted by President Steinmeier and his wife, Elke Büdenbender, at Bellevue Palace in Berlin yesterday. As well as the British Royal Family Order on her shoulder, Camilla wore the Grand Cross (Special Class) of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany on her hip. Charles wore the Order of Merit (First Class) sash — both of which had been presented to the couple earlier in the day by the president

Germans roll out red carpet (and sashes)

Valentine Low
Oliver Moody Berlin

The King pledged to strengthen ties between Britain and Germany as he spoke at a banquet on his first state visit since becoming monarch.

In a speech delivered partly in German at Bellevue Palace, the official residence of President Steinmeier, the King said friendship between the two nations had "mattered greatly to my mother, the late Queen, who cared deeply about the bond between our countries".

He went on: "The relationship between Germany and the United Kingdom matters greatly to me too, Mr President, and I am more convinced than ever of its enduring value to us all.

"It means so much to us that my wife and I could come to Germany for this very first overseas tour of my reign. I can only assure you that throughout the time that is granted to me as King, I will do all I can to strengthen the connections between us."

The King arrived at the banquet wearing the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany (First Class) sash, presented to him by the president.

Relaxed King turns on charm, pages 2-3

Parents kept in dark over gender

Four in ten schools failing to inform families when pupils question — or change — identity, report finds

Nicola Woolcock Education Editor

Schools are routinely allowing children to switch gender and not telling their parents in a "mass breach" of safeguarding, according to research published today.

The report condemned schools for uncritically accepting contested beliefs on gender identity and said the practice of affirming "gender distress" had become embedded.

Schools were neglecting safeguarding by adopting affirmative practices when confronted with children who were questioning or were confused by their gender identity, the Policy Exchange publication said.

It suggested that some schools risked breaching laws by failing to offer single-sex toilets or by allowing organisations involved in political campaigning to provide relationship and sex education lesson resources.

Geoff Barton, general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said head teachers were trying to teach children sensitively in a "minefield of strongly held and opposing views" without guidance from the government, despite requesting support.

Forty per cent of the 150 secondary schools in England that answered the right-of-centre think tank's freedom of information requests let pupils change gender without parental consent, the study found. It added that schools were "effectively facilitating medical interventions on site" by supporting pupils in their desired identity.

The former education secretaries Nadhim Zahawi and Baroness Morris of Yardley and the chairman of the Commons' education select committee, Robin Walker, have backed the report. The Labour MP Rosie Duffield said there was "systemic failure" caused by an ill-considered embrace of gender ideology and that children were paying the price for a "reckless experiment".

The report, *Asleep at the Wheel*, found that only 28 per cent of schools were "reliably informing" parents as soon as a child disclosed feelings of gender distress and that 33 per cent would not necessarily inform the designated safeguarding lead at school — instead some contacted the staff responsible for LGBT matters.

Forty per cent of schools operated policies of gender self-identification and 69 per cent of schools required other children to affirm the pupil's new identity. Some schools were mistakenly using the Equality Act or data protection rules to justify not telling families.

Among the report's recommendations were that parents should automatically be told when a child disclosed feelings of gender distress at school, unless there was a compelling reason not to. It also said no school should facilitate a child's social transition to the opposite gender unless backed by medical advice.

The Department for Education said: "The education secretary is working closely with the minister for women and equalities to produce guidance for schools."

Schools' safeguarding failure, page 7

VISIT…

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Above, a German Eurofighter escorting the King's plane into Berlin Brandenburg airport; below, Charles signing the guest book at Bellevue Palace, the official residence of the president, with his own pen — despite one being provided







I'm with her! Relaxed King turns on

Germany pulled out all the stops for Charles and Camilla on their first state visit, writes **Valentine Low** in Berlin

He is the King, head of state, honoured guest of the German people and not someone to be ordered about by anyone, least of all by someone armed with a camera. Except, perhaps, a small girl with a mission.

As Charles began the first state visit of his reign, with the pomp and ceremony of the first full military welcome at the Brandenburg Gate given to a head of state since the Second World War, he revealed something of his human side when he met members of the crowd.

The ceremony was a symbol of the importance of a visit that is only one aspect of efforts on both sides to forge new links after Brexit. Welcome ceremonies usually take place at Bellevue Palace, the official residence of the president.

During a banquet at the palace last night, the King promised to devote the rest of his reign to strengthening ties with Germany. President Steinmeier spoke of how the relationship between the two countries had survived Britain's departure from the EU, which he said had been "a sad day".

That the Germans were pulling out the stops for this visit was evident even before their royal guests arrived. As the couple flew in on the government's official RAF Voyager, they were escorted by two German Typhoons.

Then, as they arrived at the Berlin Brandenburg government airport and stood on top of the aircraft steps, the couple — the Queen in a Bruce Oldfield turquoise dress and coat, and hat by Philip Treacy — were greeted with a 21-gun salute fired from nearby field guns. Two military jets also carried out a flypast. The King and Queen were greeted at the Brandenburg Gate by Steinmeier, who is said to have a warm relationship with Charles, and his wife, Elke Büdenbender. In a country where respect for the late Elizabeth II was so deep-rooted that she was known simply as Die Queen, the relationship between the British sovereign and the German people is as much personal as it is political.

That was perhaps hard to tell as the band struck up the two national anthems in the shadow of the gate, once a symbol of German division when it stood on the border between East and West Berlin, and now a symbol of German unity. The handpicked crowd in Pariser Platz, the square in front of the monument, dutifully waved their German flags and Union Jacks, and cheered when they could.

But, being only 1,500-strong — all that the German authorities would allow there because of security concerns — their enthusiasm was never going to set Berlin alight.

On the rooftops, snipers scanned the crowds, while during the ceremony a small drone hovered overhead, looking over the royals and the guard of honour before inspecting the media stand.

When the King walked along, greeting the crowds, there was an informality about his reception that belied the grandeur of the official welcome. Some of the people were wearing paper crowns handed out by Burger King, and one man decided that the best way to foster good Anglo-German relations would be to offer the King his crown. As he tried to press it into the King's hands, he said: "This is for you, if you want it."

Charles, who will be getting his own rather grander crown on May 6, smiled broadly and said: "I'm all right!"

Then there was Hadley Drake. The eight-year-old British youngster, who was being carried by her father at the front of the crowd, had a bright child's camera with which she was determined to get a picture of the monarch.

When he looked like he was moving on — and the King has never been one to knowingly indulge the whims of photographers, whoever they are — she shouted out: "Wait!"

Stunned, perhaps, and charmed in equal measure, the King did indeed wait for a second: not long, but long enough for Hadley to get a picture. Understandably, she wanted to show it to him immediately. "Hey you, look," she said, but the King never got to hear how her picture had come out. He had more hands to shake.

As he walked along the crowd, which included pupils from local schools, members of the Royal British Legion and British embassy staff and their families, the King made a point of shaking as many hands as he could. When one woman told him she had recently been to London he said: "Oh marvellous. You found your way around? Oh, you went to Buckingham Palace!"

Julie-Ann Brooker, from Kent, was left shaking after her encounter with the King. She said: "He asked me if I had come far and I said, 'From Kent!' It was such a wonderful moment, he was a lovely, lovely man.

"My husband has just started a job here. I can't believe that I have come to Germany and met His Majesty. It's a moment I will never forget."

Visit should help to reset relations with a key partner, leading article, page 27

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Charles and Camilla were greeted by Frank-Walter Steinmeier, the German president, and his wife Elke Büdenbender at the Brandenburg Gate; refreshments at the state banquet included a 2003 Hochheimer Kirchenstück Riesling Spätlese and a 2019 Ahr 7 dessert wine; security was tight for the visit







Camilla wore the Boucheron tiara, the late Queen's necklace and the Royal Family Order, right, which carries an image of Elizabeth

charm amid careful choreography

Coalition strife keeps chancellor from dinner

Oliver Moody Berlin
Valentine Low

Olaf Scholz, the German chancellor, was missing from last night's state banquet in honour of the King and Queen, amid a struggle to placate his bickering coalition partners.

While no explanation was forthcoming, Scholz's absence was understood not to have been meant as a snub, but rather as a political expedient against a backdrop of infighting within the ranks of the German government.

The chancellor is trying to keep the peace between the two junior parties in his cabinet, the Greens and the economically liberal Free Democrats, whose disputes resulted in a 30-hour marathon of negotiations this week.

MATTHIAS SCHRADER/AP



Crowds gathered to see the King at the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin yesterday

The preparations for the King — who arrived at the banquet in the state Bentley, which had been transported from Britain — on the German side have been meticulous. Officials are mindful of the King's occasional exasperation at setbacks, and are taking pains to avoid faux pas after a gift struck a brief false note during the last British royal visit.

In 2015 the previous president, Joachim Gauck, presented the late Queen with an oil painting by the German artist Nicole Leidenfrost, based on a 1935 photograph of her as a child next to George VI. The Queen appeared to be baffled by the depiction and said she did not recognise her father.

The fountain pen handed to the King so that he could sign the guest book at the presidential residence had been "repeatedly checked" for reliability, following his irritable outburst at a malfunctioning pen last autumn.

"Our pen has never failed," Kai Baldow, head of protocol in the president's office, told the Süddeutsche Zeitung. In the end, however, the diligence was wasted as the King produced his own.

Alongside the King and Queen, last night's state dinner at Bellevue Palace, the president's residence, was attended by a number of senior German dignitaries, including Gauck and the former chancellor Angela Merkel.

The Queen wore a black evening dress with silver embroidery by Bruce Oldfield and the Boucheron diamond tiara, one of her favourites, which used to belong to the Queen Mother. She also wore the Grand Cross (Special Class) of the Order of Merit, bestowed earlier by the president, and the late Queen's fringed diamond necklace. She was also wearing the Royal Family Order, a personal honour given to senior female members of the royal family.

President Steinmeier spoke of how the "close interpersonal ties" between Britain and Germany had survived Brexit. He said: "Many feared that Brexit could make the Germans and the British drift apart. However, this did not happen. Too strong are the ties between our countries, too close the friendships between our people, too precious the reconciliation efforts after two world wars."

Dining like royalty

First course
Marinated carp and watercress with whey and pumpernickel

Second course
Beef consommé made from Heck cattle

Main course
Free-range chicken and mushrooms with a blackberry malt reduction, a swede and spinach tart and lye rolls

Dessert
Baked plum served with prune, black tea and shortbread from East Frisia, and garnished with sandgebäck, a crumbly biscuit half-covered with chocolate

The wine list included the dry white 2003 Hochheimer Kirchenstück Riesling Spätlese and a red 2013 Oppenheimer Kreuz Spatburgunder, as well as a 2019 Ahr 7 dessert wine

The menu was created by Jan-Göran Barth, head chef at Bellevue Palace

TIMES PHOTOGRAPHER RICHARD POHLE



Modest muse Sophia Dalrymple's portrait by G F Watts, circa 1851, returns to Watts Gallery in Compton, Surrey, for an exhibition of the Victorian artist's portraiture

Ofgem threatens The Times over prepaid meters exposé

Jonathan Ames Legal Editor

The energy regulator Ofgem has threatened The Times and one of its journalists with criminal sanctions after they exposed how agents working for British Gas were routinely breaking into customers' homes.

The watchdog has sent letters to the newspaper and Paul Morgan-Bentley, its head of investigations, threatening unlimited fines if they do not hand over all the reporter's relevant materials, including confidential notes and undercover footage.

The Times is refusing to comply, claiming that the threats are unlawful, and has highlighted to Ofgem the importance of protecting journalistic material in a democratic society.

Grant Shapps, the energy security secretary, criticised Ofgem last night.

"I expect Ofgem to focus on fixing the problem rather than pursuing journalists doing their jobs," he said. "The government supports freedom of the press and the right to protect journalistic materials. The Times was highlighting an important issue, which I would encourage Ofgem to resolve."

The regulator sent the legal threats after this newspaper disclosed that agents working for British Gas were being sent to break into homes and force-fit prepayment meters, even when customers were known to have extreme vulnerabilities.

The pay-as-you-go meters have been more expensive to run and cut off families if they cannot afford to top up.

While working undercover, Morgan-Bentley discovered that families targeted this winter included a single father with three children, the mother of a four-week-old baby and a woman in her fifties known to have severe mental health problems. As a result of the reports, all UK energy companies have been suspended from force-fitting prepayment meters until they agree to a legally enforceable code of practice.



Paul Morgan-Bentley worked with agents undercover to fit prepayment meters to British Gas clients' homes

Ofgem began an investigation into practices at British Gas and Arvato Financial Solutions, the third party debt collection agency it used. As part of its inquiry, Ofgem also sent letters this month to The Times and Morgan-Bentley.

The reporter was asked to "produce to the authority all the documents in its custody or control", including papers the regulator should have been able to obtain from British Gas and Arvato.

Ofgem demanded to see the undercover recordings and the journalist's "personal notes". The notices suggested it was a criminal offence not to comply "without reasonable excuse" and noted the possibility of unlimited fines.

The newspaper responded to the regulator yesterday, stating that the information requests were unlawful attempts to force the compulsory disclosure of journalistic material.

The Times told Ofgem that its investigation arose after Morgan-Bentley's public-interest journalism. "It is a serious step to threaten a journalist with criminal sanction and there was no basis in law to do so on this occasion," the newspaper said.

The reporting has led to investigations by Ofgem, the government and two parliamentary committees. Courts have been ordered to stop listing hearings for energy warrants "until further notice". The spring budget included an announcement that households on prepayment meters would no longer pay more than other customers.

Centrica has apologised for agents' conduct and said protecting customers was "an absolute priority". Arvato said it "acts compliantly in accordance with the regulatory requirements".

An Ofgem spokesman said enforcement action was started against British Gas after the reports.

He added: "This is a complex process requiring extensive information gathering. We asked The Times to share voluntarily any additional documents or material to support this work. It felt it was unable to share further information. We used our specific legal powers, therefore, to request the information and provide a lawful basis under which The Times could disclose the information to us, given the clear public interest in protecting vulnerable consumers."

The Times urges energy regulator to think again, leading article, page 27

Walkouts in France to hit UK flights

Ben Clatworthy
Transport Correspondent, Brussels

Holidaymakers face Easter travel chaos after French air traffic controllers said they were preparing to walk out every day next month.

The heads of Europe's largest airlines said passengers would have a "very difficult" summer because of industrial action that disproportionately affects flights from the UK.

Michael O'Leary, chief executive of Ryanair, said the walkouts "will have a huge impact". Johan Lundgren, the boss of easyJet, said that problems outside the airline's control, including strikes, posed a "huge challenge".

Ryanair was forced to cancel 230 flights last weekend because of strikes in France. It had to cancel 60 yesterday and a further 60 today.

Short-haul flights leaving the UK and Spain are badly affected because France uses minimum service legislation to protect domestic departures and long-haul flights "overflying" the airspace. The result is mass cancellations of short-haul flights using French airspace but not landing in the country.

O'Leary said: "It is difficult to explain to passengers in the UK, Ireland and Spain that their flights are cancelled because of a few air traffic controllers in France walking out, even though their flight is not landing in France."

French air traffic controllers, who retire at 57 and are exempt from President Macron's plans to increase the retirement age from 62 to 64, are walking out in solidarity with other sectors.

British Airways was told on Monday that it must cut 5 per cent of its schedule — about 300 flights — over Easter because of airport security strikes.

Quintagram® No 1589

Solve all five clues using each letter underneath once only

1 Euphoria (3)

_ _ _

2 Season (6)

_ _ _ _ _ _

3 Downland songbird (7)

_ _ _ _ _ _ _

4 Often rain-bringing air current (4,4)

_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

5 State of being on one's own (8)

_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

A	A	D	D	E	E	I	I
J	K	K	L	L	M	N	N
O	O	R	S	S	S	T	T
T	U	U	U	W	W	Y	Y

Solutions T2 MindGames p15
Cryptic clues T2 MindGames p14

Met drops MP sex case

A Tory MP says he has been cleared by police over an allegation of serious sexual assault. Julian Knight, 51, who had chaired the culture select committee before being suspended in December and had described the claim as false and malicious, said the Metropolitan Police had decided "there was nothing for them to investigate".

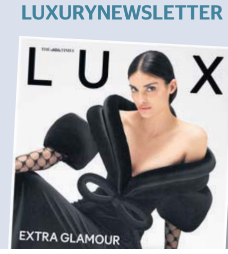
Neave murder appeal

A man found guilty last year of killing a boy aged six in 1994 has been granted leave to appeal against his conviction. James Watson, 41, was 13 when Rikki Neave's naked body was discovered in woods near his hme in Peterborough. Lord Burnett of Maldon, the lord chief justice, said Watson had arguable grounds for a full appeal.

Top award for Luxx

The Times luxury and lifestyle magazine Luxx has been named national colour supplement of the year at the Newspaper Awards. Judges praised editor in-chief Kate Reardon's 'gorgeous' photography and design in an awards ceremony in London's Bankside

Can't wait for the next edition of Luxx? Sign up to the new Times Luxury newsletter, direct to your inbox every month
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British Film Institute admitted it was racist, claims producer

Alex Farber Media Correspondent

The British Film Institute has privately admitted to being "systemically racist", according to a film producer whose credits include *Leaving Neverland* and *Four Lions*.

Faisal A Qureshi said that he had been treated with a "mixture of condescension and contempt" by the BFI after receiving an apology for the way in which it handled his long-running complaint over alleged discrimination.

The dispute was first reported by Deadline, the trade title, which said that his views had been echoed by several other film-makers including Kolton Lee, the former editor of The Voice, a British African-Caribbean newspaper. It centres around a 2019 meeting in which Qureshi said he faced micro-aggressions, which he considered to be racist, and was wrongly told he was ineligible for funding.

Qureshi said that he continues to feel let down by the BFI for not providing him with a formal written apology or an independent investigation into racism.

He said: "It reinforced the impression that the BFI is a publicly-funded private club where people who don't look like the gatekeepers are rarely allowed inside." The admission of racism to Qureshi was made by Melanie Hoyes, the BFI's head of inclusion, who is black. She apologised to the film-maker.

The BFI is responsible for allocating about £45 million of National Lottery funds each year, with 35 per cent of the productions supported last year from black, Asian and minority ethnic film-makers. Current projects include *Rye Lane* from Raine Allen-Miller, a black film-maker. Yesterday it announced a Skills Task Force, which has diversity and inclusion at its heart, having set out a pan to tackle inequality in 2020 which includes overhauling its complaints procedure. Ben Roberts, the chief executive of the BFI, said becoming "truly anti-racist" is a top priority.

"As a public funder and the industry's lead body, the BFI is rightly held to the highest standards," he said.

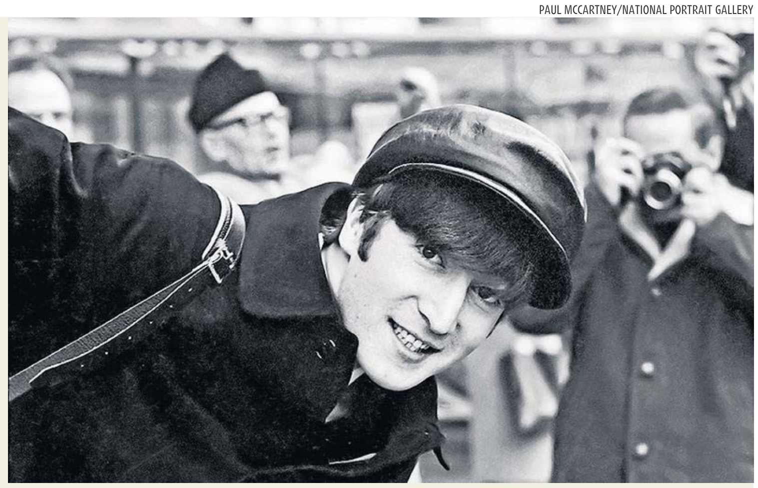
Marcus Ryder, a diversity campaigner, highlighted a Film and TV Charity survey of 2,000 industry professionals of colour which found that 25 per cent had experienced racism at work, but only a fifth went on to report the abuse.

"You can't develop coherent policies if you don't know the true scale of the problem," he said.

Bectu, the broadcasting, entertainment, communications and theatre union, said: "The concerns raised in this report point to why we need an independent anti-racist reporting body. We frequently hear reports that industry workers feel discriminated against and fear reporting it will 'damage' their careers."

PAUL MCCARTNEY/NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY







Newly discovered pictures of George Harrison in Miami, John Lennon in Paris and Ringo Starr are among 1,000 taken by Paul McCartney in a period of a few months in 1963 and 1964

From Miami to Paris, a magical Beatles tour

George is happy on Miami Beach, John is happy in Paris, and Ringo? Well, Ringo appears happy anywhere (David Sanderson writes).

More unseen photographs taken by Paul McCartney at the height of Beatlemania have been issued by the National Portrait Gallery. The images — part of a 1,000-strong stash taken by McCartney on his Pentax between November 1963 and February 1964 — were discovered only in 2020.

Dozens of the images are to be displayed at a National Portrait Gallery exhibition, *Paul McCartney Photographs 1963-64: Eyes of the Storm*, opening in late June.

Three capture John Lennon in Paris in January 1964, George Harrison "looking young, handsome and relaxed" on Miami Beach, being served by a swimsuit-clad waitress, and Ringo Starr in London.

There is also a self-portrait, and a picture taken in Central Park, New York, of two of the dozens of photographers who followed the band as they took the United States by storm.

Hundreds of the photos taken on the band's tours during the 1960s are to be published in June by Penguin Random House in the book *1964: Eyes of the Storm*. The images show band members backstage in Liverpool, rehearsing at a recording studio in Paris, in a wintry New York and finally in a sunny Miami.

McCartney has said that he can remember taking his photographs but had assumed they were lost. "Looking at these photos now, decades after they were taken, I find there's a sort of innocence about them," he said. "Everything was new to us at this point. But I like to think I wouldn't take them any differently today. They now bring back so many stories, a flood of special memories, which is one of the many reasons I love them all, and know that they will always fire my imagination."

Nicholas Cullinan, the director of the National Portrait Gallery, said: "We have become familiar with press photographs showing the smiling Beatles and their screaming fans, but Paul McCartney's intimate photographs have more in common with a family album, capturing people caught in off-guard moments."

Paltrow trial 'bad for accuser's health'

Keiran Southern Los Angeles

The retired doctor suing Gwyneth Paltrow over a 2016 ski collision in Utah should walk away from the lawsuit for the good of his health, a court has been told.

Terry Sanderson, 76, is suing the Oscar-winning actress for more than $300,000, alleging her recklessness left him with physical injuries and brain damage.

Paltrow, 50, has countersued for $1 and said it was in fact he who slammed into her at an upscale ski resort in Park City.

On day seven of the trial in Park City, the jury heard expert testimony from Dr Robert Hoesch, a neurologist who reviewed Sanderson's medical records, including brain scans from 2009. He said Sanderson's complaints of symptoms including confusion and memory loss were far more likely to be linked to his long-term depression and anxiety rather than a skiing collision.

Hoesch said that Sanderson's fixation on the incident with Paltrow could be having a detrimental effect on his health and he would benefit from the lawsuit's immediate conclusion.

Of the collision, Hoesch said: "It's my job as a neurologist to help him accept that that's not part of what he's experiencing now." He said he would also evaluate Sanderson for dementia.

Hoesch added: "My job is to help the patient and family gain acceptance that this mild event seven years ago isn't causing all these problems that he's having now."

Asked by Steve Owens, Paltrow's lawyer, if the "cure" for Sanderson was the end of the lawsuit, Hoesch replied: "Correct."

He said: "Suing somebody, going through a trial, a trial that has national recognition, can bring on a lot of anxiety and if you're prone to that, it's going to make it worse and it's going to slow your recovery."

The neurologist added that becoming "obsessed" with a case could lead to "cognitive dysfunction", including problems with concentration and memory.

Hoesch believes Sanderson may have dementia symptoms. He added: "As a neurologist, I have patients that come in and they have a complaint of cognitive symptoms, memory loss, retention problems, difficulty doing things that they used to do, they can have depression and anxiety, they may have early signs of dementia.

"Those things are far more common for someone in Mr Sanderson's category."

Sanderson, a retired optometrist, previously suffered a stroke which left him blind in his right eye. The trial previously heard testimony from Paltrow, who said she was skiing down an almost empty slope at the Deer Valley Resort with her family when Sanderson slammed into her back.

On Tuesday the court heard the depositions of Paltrow's children Apple, 18, and Moses, 16, who did not witness the incident but said their mother had complained that a man had hit her from behind.

The teenagers had both been expected to testify in person. However, time constraints imposed by the judge meant that transcripts of their previous depositions were read out to the court instead.

The judge has scheduled closing arguments in the case for today.

The trial continues.

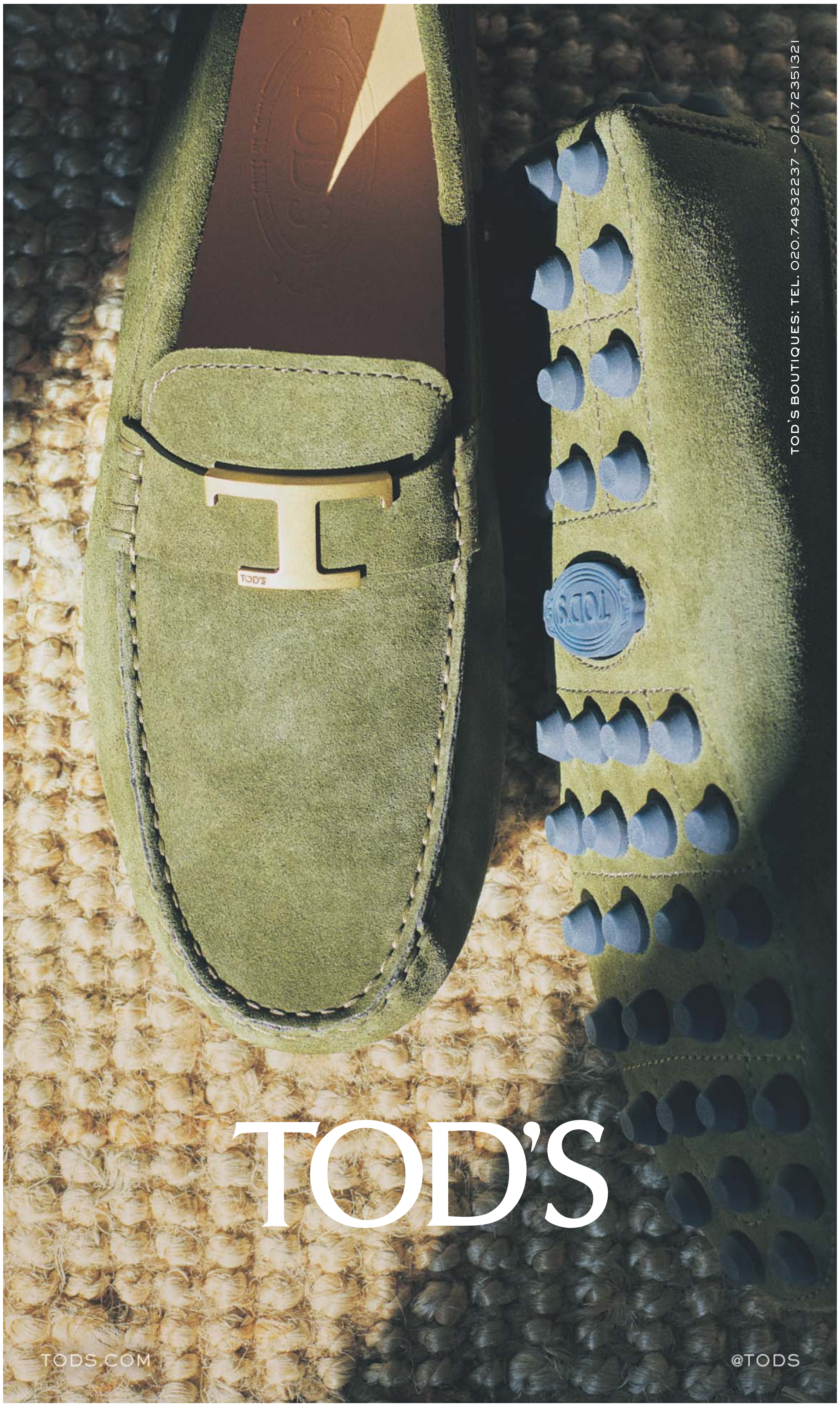


Gwyneth Paltrow is in court over a ski collision



MAX WILLCOCK/BNPS

Even keel Obioma Oji helps to construct a wooden vessel at the Boat Building Academy in Lyme Regis, Dorset. It is running a women-only course to correct the gender imbalance, as only 8 per cent of its 600 students since 1997 have been female



E-scooters 'pose biggest new fire threat in London'

Peter Chappell, Andrew Ellson

Exploding batteries on e-scooters and e-bikes pose the biggest emerging threat of fire in the capital, the London Fire Brigade has warned.

There have been 37 fires in the capital this year started by an e-bike or e-scooter, a 60 per cent increase on the same period last year.

A spokesman for the fire service said that fires involving lithium batteries were the "fastest growing fire risk" facing the city, and that it had particular concerns about the use of kits allowing regular bicycles to be converted into e-bikes, often with unregulated batteries bought online.

"Cheaper batteries purchased from online sources which don't necessarily adhere to UK safety regulations are more likely to fail and present an increased fire risk. DIY installations can also lead to damage of the kit, increasing the chances of battery failure and the likelihood of a fire," the spokesman added.

Last year the London Fire Brigade attended 87 e-bike and 29 e-scooter fires. It is urging the government to improve regulation of the products, including better safeguards for customers using online marketplaces. Batteries are on sale online for between £300 and £1,000.

"The government should bring forward the product safety review being led by the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) and ensure safeguards are in place for people unknowingly purchasing dangerous products from online marketplaces," the spokesman said. "The OPSS should carry out more market surveillance and research on products coming forward on the market to fully understand the risks associated with lithium battery technology."

At present, e-scooters can be used legally only on private land or as part of one of 31 government trials across the country, although the rules are widely ignored. Riders in the government-run trials need to have a driving licence and insurance.

It has been estimated that there are a million e-scooters on Britain's roads. The Metropolitan Police spent at least £400,000 in 2021 on storage for the thousands of e-scooters that had been seized, even though these represented a tiny number of illegal vehicles.

There is no requirement for a driving licence to ride an electric bike and they do not need to be registered, taxed or insured. The rules say that they should not be able to travel power-assisted at more than 15.5mph, but the Met has seized modified vehicles that can do up to 60mph.

The charity Electrical Safety First said: "Fires caused by lithium ion batteries can be ferocious and produce deadly toxic fumes — they start rapidly due to the amount of energy the batteries store.

"We have found unsafe chargers for e-scooters, as well as e-bikes that could cause a fire, freely available for sale via online marketplaces. It's vital you use a safe and compatible charger that won't risk overcharging or damaging the battery. Stick to reputable retailers."

Q&A

Who can ride an e-scooter?
Anyone over 18 who has a full or provisional driving licence.

Where can you ride one?
Trials are taking place in councils including some London boroughs, Cambridge, Somerset, Newcastle, Liverpool and the West Midlands. Trial e-scooters are capped at 12.5mph and automatically reduce speed to 8mph in "go slow" areas.

Can you take it on public transport?
E-scooters are generally banned on aircraft, Transport for London (TfL) services, LNER and Northern trains, and MegaBus services.

How much does it cost to hire one?
It costs about £1 to "unlock" one via apps such as Uber and Lime, then the ride costs about 17p per minute. TfL says a 15-minute journey will cost about £3.50.

Law threatening freedom of press to be withdrawn

Kieran Gair

A controversial law that would force publishers to pay the legal costs of the people who sue them will be repealed, the government has announced.

The law, drawn up a decade ago and included under section 40 of the Crime and Courts Act 2013, threatened penalties on newspapers that declined to join a state-sponsored regulator.

Section 40 was devised in the wake of Sir Brian Leveson's inquiry into press standards. It would have forced most newspaper publishers to pay the costs of claimants in privacy and libel cases even if the newspaper won unless they signed up to the oversight of a state-supervised charter.

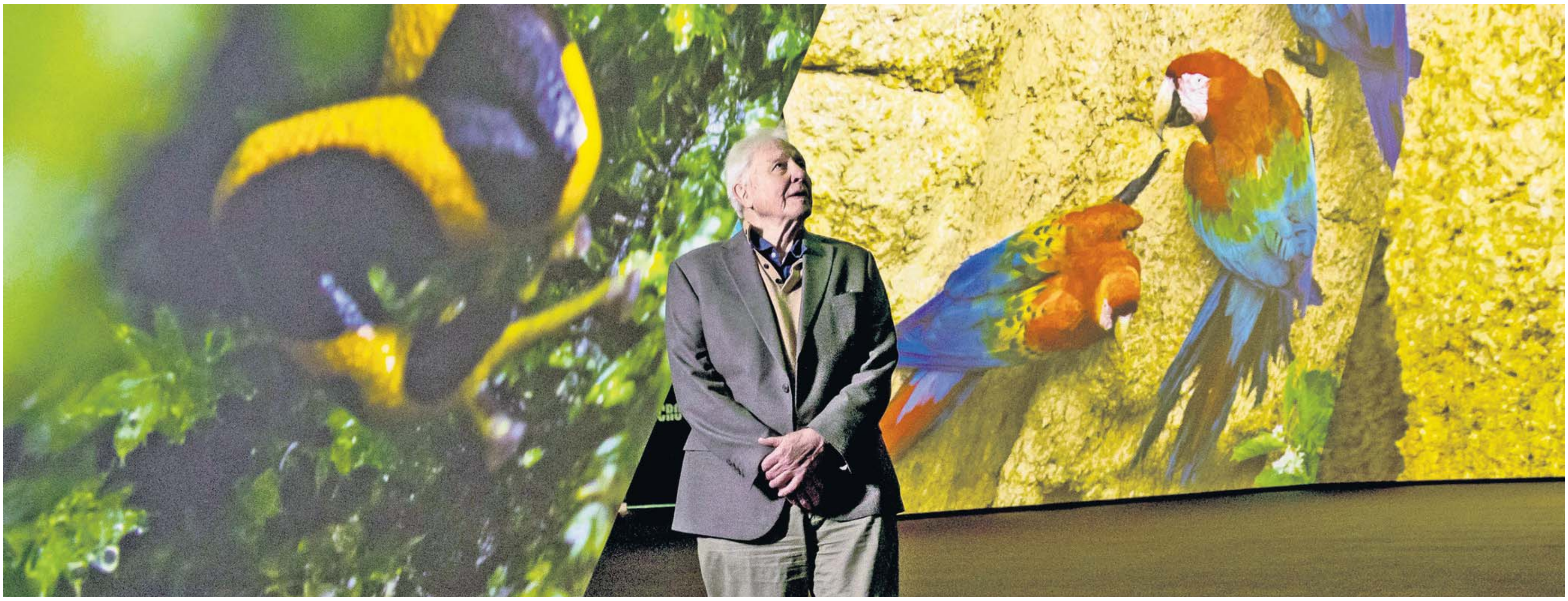
In a rare display of industry-wide unity, national and local publishers and other news organisations opposed section 40 and called for ministers to scrap the proposal.

The Times joined all other national newspaper groups in objecting to section 40, arguing that it would undermine the principle of press freedom.

The provision was never brought into force.

Dawn Alford, executive director of the Society of Editors, welcomed the draft legislation. She said: "For the best part of a decade, the threat of section 40 has been wielded over publishers in a bid to force them to join a government-backed press regulator.

"Not only does section 40 fundamentally go against the principle that justice must be fair, but it would also have a devastating impact on investigative journalism as well as imposing crippling costs on publishers simply for telling the truth."



Wild world Sir David Attenborough attends a preview of BBC Earth Experience, launching at the Daikin Centre in Earl's Court, west London, today. The interactive attraction celebrates the planet's biodiversity

Schools 'are failing pupils' on gender

Nicola Woolcock Education Editor

Children are being allowed to live in a different gender without concern for the impact on their classmates, a think tank has said.

Pupils are forced to accept as reality classmates who decide to transition, according to Policy Exchange's report.

Lavatories and changing-room provision and choice of sport are all affected by school policies on sex and gender. The report found that at least 28 per cent of schools do not have single-sex toilets and 19 per cent lack single-sex changing rooms. About 60 per cent of schools allow children to take part in sports traditionally played by the opposite sex. Sixty-nine per cent of schools require other children to affirm a "gender-distressed" pupil's new identity, and 13 per cent do not. The others did not provide enough detail.

"A number of schools associated this question with transphobia or invoked their commitment to be inclusive, the implication being that if a school did not require other children to afford a socially transitioned child's new identity, this would be transphobic of the school or the students," the report said.

Regressive stereotypes in cultural and social attributes associated with gender were used in relationships and sex education materials, it added.

"By uncritically accepting contested beliefs on gender identity, as well as . . . affirming a child's belief that they are the opposite gender to their sex, schools are failing to consider their safeguarding duties, not just to gender-distressed children but to their peers as well," the report said. It criticised schools letting pupils socially transition, as this was often the first form of treatment in moving towards medical intervention, meaning schools were "unwittingly pushing children" down that path.

Schools were far more likely to allow a socially transitioned child to take part in opposite-sex sports than use toilets or changing rooms meant for the opposite sex. A number of schools said they would provide alternative facilities if a child felt uncomfortable in those of their biological sex. A small number of schools said all their toilets were unisex, which the report suggested was a potential breach of the law.

Resources used in schools included a diagram of the "Genderbread Person", which differentiates between anatomical sex, gender identity, gender expression and attraction. The creator's explanation of gender expression includes a paragraph about prowling around the kitchen like Catwoman when feeling feminine and eating cereal aggressively like a Viking when a person is "bumping up [their] levels of masculinity". A class on gender identity told pupils not to use the terms "biologically male/female" as they "oversimplify a complex subject".

A school in Liverpool suggests PE lessons should be adapted for those who bind their breasts. Elsewhere, pupils were asked to define at least five gender identities, while a school in Cornwall used transgender guidance contributed to by the police amid fears over "discrimination".

Baroness Morris of Yardley, the education secretary under Tony Blair, said there was an "incompatibility between current practice for gender-distressed children and well-established and universally accepted safeguarding principles". She added: "We cannot compromise child wellbeing in favour of gender identity beliefs and no school should facilitate affirmative practice."

Robin Walker, chairman of the Commons' education select committee, called the report deeply concerning. He said: "Parents should never have to worry about contested ideology being imposed or medical decisions being taken without their knowledge."

Behind the story

More than half of schools surveyed by Policy Exchange engaged with agencies to help them deliver sex and relationships education.

The agencies most frequently named were the Proud Trust, the Rainbow Flag Award, Just Like Us, Diversity Role Models and the PSHE Association.

The Proud Trust describes itself as a "life-changing charity providing education, support and advocacy for LGBT+ young people". It provides a sold-out toolkit featuring two inflatable dice with terms for certain body parts printed on their faces. When the dice are rolled, the teacher asks the group about the pleasures and risks of combining those parts. Its website says: "Through this activity, young people are encouraged to take control of their sexual choices and their own bodies."

Policy Exchange said the trust presents gender identity beliefs as facts, adding: "A large number of schools we asked had worked with the Proud Trust, either directly or through downloadable resources. Very few of these resources are publicly available on their website. It also runs a live chat service with LGBT+ mentors and an additional mentorship scheme. It is not clear from the website how these mentors are selected, trained or vetted, as there is no policy listed online."

The Times has previously reported that the trust produces resources asking children aged seven to 11 whether they are "planet boy, planet girl, planet non-binary". A lesbian is described by the trust as someone who identifies as a woman and is usually attracted only to other women, not someone who is biologically a woman. This reinforces the expectation that lesbians should be attracted to men who identify as women.

Its report said that since 2017, government departments have paid the Proud Trust more than £620,000 and that between 2017 and 2019 it was paid almost £360,000 for "delivery of whole-school approach to combating homophobia, biphobia and transphobia".

The Rainbow Flag Award is delivered by the Proud Trust in the northwest of England and by other LGBT+ organisations across the rest of the country. It is given to schools after a year-long programme they help to devise. Resources it offers include a "trans inclusion schools toolkit" and advice on managing gender dysphoria. Those quoted include a 24-year-old "panromantic" trans man and a trans woman who says she now "likes her boobs thanks to HRT" but that she has "outie genitals where I should have an innie".

The scheme also delivers resources that link to lessons across the national curriculum, rather than only sex and relationships education lessons. This includes a maths and music plan based on the Eurovision Song Contest which has slides on the former winners Conchita Wurst, the Austrian drag queen, and Dana International, who was born male.

Children need to be protected from this reckless experiment

Rosie Duffield
Comment

It is universally accepted that safeguarding is fundamental to a responsible society. These principles are enshrined in law and applicable to all organisations and functions relating to children. There is never a good reason why safeguarding should be compromised, especially in school, where children spend the majority of their time outside home.

Policy Exchange's report demonstrates that there is a mass breaching of safeguarding principles when it comes to gender-distressed children and their peers.

The rising number of such children, and their treatment in clinical settings, is being given the attention it deserves. In an NHS-commissioned independent review, Dr Hilary Cass found the Tavistock gender clinic in London to be adopting an "unquestioning, affirmative approach" without exploring other factors causing these children's distress.

Affirmation as a one-size-fits-all solution has been discredited and the clinic is being shut down.

However, Policy Exchange has revealed that the same approach is being facilitated in schools, which breaks every safeguarding rule.

Schools have no authority to decide whether social transition is the right outcome for a gender-distressed child. Safeguarding principles are there to protect both children and staff: they protect teachers from being ill-equipped to deal with issues that require external specialisms, and ensure children receive appropriate service provision as soon as possible.

Gender identity beliefs are contested and based on unscientific notions, yet this report shows they are being taught in relationships, sex and health education classes as though they are facts.

Times readers will be all too familiar with reports of this. Schools seem unaware of their obligations to be politically impartial. Encouraging children to believe that their transient ideas about themselves are more determinative of their identity than their chromosomal DNA is not just misleading, but dangerous too.

This vital report demonstrates there to be a fundamental incompatibility between affirmative practice and the safeguarding principles schools are required to uphold. It is time for the government to clamp down on the systemic failure of the school system to protect children from this reckless experiment.

Rosie Duffield is MP for Canterbury and co-patron of Policy Exchange's Biology Matters project

News Politics

Push to build turbines and ditch

Adam Vaughan Environment Editor

The government will extend its £5,000 grants for households to ditch polluting gas boilers and will move to speed up planning bottlenecks for offshore wind farms, under plans to boost energy security.

Launching the Powering Up Britain package today, ministers will attend a nuclear fusion research project near Oxford and spell out proposals for small nuclear plants, carbon capture schemes, electric car charging points and home insulation, among other measures. The controversial Rosebank oil and gas field is also expected to clear a key regulatory hurdle today but not yet receive final approval.

Grant Shapps, the energy secretary, could not promise any of the new package of measures would bring down bills in the next year. He said he expected bills to fall this year due to reductions in wholesale energy prices.

Longer-term, he expects a new "Great British insulation scheme" to save about 300,000 homes up to £400 on their annual energy bills.

In an effort to spur people to ditch fossil fuels, the boiler upgrade scheme, which offers homes £5,000 for heat pumps running on electricity, will be extended from 2025 to 2028. The higher price of electricity will be tackled by a consultation to shift green levies off electricity and on to gas bills.

It emerged last night that ministers will today unveil plans to encourage households to use electricity rather than gas. The Daily Telegraph reported that it is hoped an overhaul of subsidy rules will help the country meet its net-zero ambitions by 2050. Shapps said: "If we want people to switch to an electricity-based economy, it would be better if [levies] were shifted on to the gas side of things. It makes the economics of an electric-driven economy better."

Responding to a review by the former chief scientific officer Sir Patrick Vallance, ministers will also consult on national policy statements that they hope will cut delays on energy networks. Years-long planning delays for new pylons and onshore substations have proved a headache for developers of offshore wind farms.

In an investment highlighted by Shapps, ScottishPower has signed a £1.3 billion deal for turbines for its East Anglia 3 offshore wind farm. Other developers, such as Denmark's Orsted, have warned that inflation is putting such projects at risk.

The government said its energy security plan would lead to billions of pounds in private spending. But Shapps was unable to confirm whether there was any new government money, pointing only to the set-up costs for a body to back new reactors, Great British Nuclear Plant. Simon Bowen, nuclear adviser to the prime minister, was announced as its interim chairman.

Shapps said the energy package was crucial to continue meeting binding carbon targets, which government advisers have said will be missed later this decade. He said progress on transport emissions had been "much less spectacular" than those in the power sector. As transport secretary from 2019 to 2022, he said he took "full responsibility" for that failure.

Today's measures include completely or partially accepting 23 of 25 recommendations of the independent net-zero review by Chris Skidmore, the Tory MP who has warned that the UK risks slipping behind in a global green race.

Alok Sharma, the Tory MP who was president of the Cop26 climate conference in Glasgow, said the announcements were welcome but lacked a "big bazooka moment".

Juliet Phillips of the think tank E3G welcomed the backing for heat pumps and insulation. But she noted a third of the £6.3 billion the 2019 Conservative manifesto promised on domestic energy efficiency was still not allocated.

Experts said there was little new in the plans. Dr Robert Gross, of the UK Energy Research Centre and Imperial College London, said: "There is a lot in the announcement to welcome, even though not very much of it is new."

The announcement was also notable for what was missing. There were no new details of whether a ban on onshore wind farms in England would be lifted. Ed Miliband, shadow climate secretary, said: "What was billed with huge hype as the government's 'green day' turns out to be a weak and feeble groundhog day of re-announcements and no new investment."

Miliband earlier criticised the Rosebank oil and gas field, being developed by the Norwegian company Equinor, as a waste of taxpayer subsidies. The Times understands it will clear a regulatory step with the government's Offshore Petroleum Regulator for Environment and Decommissioning, a step short of a licence to begin development.

Driving landlords out of business will not help renters, Thunderer, page 24
Hunt: We must not forget lessons of financial crisis, page 36



Angela Rayner appeared to reference bullying allegations when she told Dominic

We must invest in our independence

Jeremy Hunt
Comment

Transforming our energy system is no longer just about tackling climate change, it is also a matter of national security. To protect ourselves from future price spikes, we need to accelerate the move to cleaner, cheaper, home-grown energy.

Recent international events give a new sense of urgency to energy security, but this transition has always been a priority for the UK.

While no one doubts that the US government's Inflation Reduction Act is a significant intervention, it is not the starting pistol in the race for green tech. That race started decades ago in the UK, with the world now playing catch-up.

Just under 40 per cent of our power was generated from renewable sources last year, double the rate of the US. We have invested more in green growth per year since 2021 than planned annual US spending under the Inflation Reduction Act over the next ten years, relative to the size of our respective economies.

Today we are going further with our "Powering Up Britain" plan, the first part of our response to the challenges created by the US act ahead of an even fuller national response at the autumn statement.

However, our approach will be different — and better. We are not going toe-to-toe with our friends and allies in some distortive global subsidy race. With the threat of protectionism creeping its way back into the world economy, the long-term solution is not subsidy but security.

Yes, we will continue to back industries of the future, however, we will target public funding in a strategic way in the areas where the UK has a clear competitive advantage. That's why we are investing £30 billion to support our green industrial revolution, with an additional £6 billion for energy efficiency, and up to £20 billion for carbon capture, utilisation and storage.

While taxpayer support is important to kick-start new industries, we need to leverage billions more in private capital.

In a sense, this is "the British way". Not massively distortive subsidies, but fantastic science, innovation-rich companies, and a pro-growth regulatory regime — powered by private capital from our global financial centre.

This tried-and-tested model works. That is why we are clearing the path so money that sits in the City of London can be used to fund our green industrial revolution.

Our updated green finance strategy, published today, will unlock billions in private capital for energy security and clean growth.

Most of Britain's nuclear fleet will be decommissioned this decade. We need to replace what we're losing and go further — from large-scale plants to small modular reactors.

Last year, I announced the first state-financed investment in nuclear for a generation in Sizewell C — the sister project to Hinkley Point C, which is under construction.

This year, we announced our plan to designate nuclear as "environmentally sustainable", subject to consultation, giving it access to the same investment incentives as renewable energy. And through our new delivery body, Great British Nuclear, we are going to ramp up nuclear power, so it provides up to one quarter of our electricity by 2050.

After 30 years of policy failure, we are turning the tide on new nuclear.

However, this isn't just about money — public or private. We need to ensure we are using our new-found regulatory autonomy to deliver growth.

Last year, I asked Sir Patrick Vallance, the chief scientific adviser, to identify key regulations we can change to unlock investment and innovation in green industries.

Today I have accepted all his recommendations, including on furthering our reforms to the planning system and improving grid connections so we aren't wasting precious renewable energy.

But in the global race for green growth, we are not going to push British jobs and our industries abroad.

Outsourcing our emissions to neighbouring countries does nothing for the climate, nor for our economic security and resilience.

That's why we are also consulting on a range of market-based carbon pricing policies to ensure we're promoting global decarbonisation, not local deindustrialisation.

Ultimately, the best and only way to ensure our energy independence is to invest in domestic sources of energy that fall outside President Putin's, or any autocrat's, control.

We will do that by pulling every lever at our disposal to scale up cheap renewables and new nuclear, while maximising economically viable North Sea oil and gas as we transition. Today we deliver that.

Jeremy Hunt is the chancellor

Quentin Letts

Saints and sinners in a battle over blasphemy

Political Sketch

Not since John Gott (dec 1922), a secularist trouser salesman from Yorkshire, has anyone been publicly charged with blasphemy. Joanna Cherry KC (SNP, Edinburgh South West) may soon put that right. Cherry accused a Home Office minister yesterday of blasphemous misconduct. She did so with terrific crossness. When Sister Cherry is cross, as happens quite occasionally, she tends to pursue her prey deep into the warren.

"You're blasphemous, you!" she cried, standing on her petite feet and stabbing a forefinger at Robert Jenrick, the immigration minister. Such was Cherry's acidity that Dame Eleanor Laing, deputy Speaker, had to restore a sense of ecclesiastical calm.

Jenrick's sin was to tease Scots MPs who often say the government should accept more asylum seekers but stop such souls being housed in their own towns. As parliamentary debaters go, Jenrick is on the stolid, Calvinist side. Just this once, however, he essayed sassy irony and

gas in dash for energy security



ANDY BAILEY/UK PARLIAMENT



Raab that he 'knows first-hand the misery called by thugs and their intimidating behaviour'

Rayner taunts Raab over bad behaviour

Angela Rayner insinuated Dominic Raab was a "thug" during a fiery stand-in session of prime minister's questions (Henry Zeffman writes).

Labour's deputy leader used the recent announcement of plans to stop antisocial behaviour to make a reference to the formal bullying complaints against the deputy prime minister.

"I'll give him some credit: the deputy prime minister knows first-hand the misery caused by thugs and their intimidating behaviour," Rayner said. "So can I ask him, under his new anti-social behaviour [policy] does he think more bullies will be brought to justice?"

Raab hit back: "I can assure the house I've never called anyone scum."

In 2020 Rayner heckled a Tory MP in the Commons, calling him "scum". She later apologised.

The deputy prime minister has been under investigation by Adam Tolley KC since November. Tolley is not expected to deliver his findings before the end of the week, and his report is not likely to be published until after Easter.

Starmer: I'd freeze council tax with fuel firm windfall

Henry Zeffman
Associate Political Editor

A Labour government would freeze council tax this year, Sir Keir Starmer is expected to say today, as he tries to cast himself as the candidate of low tax for workers.

As he launches Labour's local elections campaign in Swindon, Starmer will say that if he were prime minister, council tax bills would stay at the same level rather than rising at the weekend. Labour would fund this with a "proper" windfall tax on the profits of oil and gas companies.

Starmer will argue that voters have a clear "choice" on tax, contrasting his wish to freeze council tax with the scrapping of the tax-free lifetime allowance for wealthy pensioners announced by Jeremy Hunt in the budget a fortnight ago.

In a stump speech to party supporters, Starmer is expected to say: "There is a choice on tax. A Tory choice —taxes up for working people, tax cuts for the 1 per cent — or a Labour choice, where we cut business rates to save our high streets and where, if there was a Labour government, you could take that council tax rise you just got and rip it up.

"A Labour government would freeze your council tax this year — that's our choice. A tax cut for the many, not just for the top 1 per cent. So take this message to every doorstep in your community: Labour is the party of lower taxes for working people."

Labour argues that the government is effectively forcing local authorities to increase council tax by reducing central funding but giving council leaders more flexibility to raise rates. Council tax rates will increase by an average of 5.1 per cent across England from this weekend, pushing the annual rate for a band D property above £2,000.

As well as reaffirming Labour's promise to reverse the changes to pensions allowances, Starmer will say that in the long term, Labour would "keep energy bills low" for Britons by insulating 19 million homes. He will also highlight Labour's pledge to abolish non-dom tax status, using the money to pay for "one of the biggest expansions of the NHS workforce in history".

Starmer will say: "We've got to send a message to this government: what they've delivered to our country after 13 years in power is nowhere near good enough. Just look around Britain. Seven million on NHS waiting lists.

"Crime — totally unpunished. The biggest hit to living standards — the cash in your pocket — on record. Does anyone honestly think that Britain can't do better than this?"

Launching Labour's local elections campaign in the town is a sign of Starmer's confidence about the contests, which are the first major electoral test since Boris Johnson and Liz Truss's governments collapsed and Labour surged ahead in the polls. Swindon borough council is narrowly under Conservative control, with a third of its councillors up for election on May 4.

Other areas where Labour will want to show progress before a likely general election next year include Bolton, Cheshire, Plymouth and Teesside.

Greg Hands, the Conservative Party chairman, said: "Labour's announcement isn't worth the paper it's written on. They have no plan to introduce this if elected. They're taking the British people for fools. If Labour were serious about cutting council tax, Labour councils would be doing it now."

Starmer's skewering of Corbyn is delectable, Janice Turner, page 24

described the Scots Nats as "humanitarian nimbys" for their position on asylum seekers. "They take the kind of St Augustine approach — 'Lord, let us welcome refugees, but not in our constituencies'."

This was an echo of St Augustine of Hippo, whose *Confessions* included the prayer "*da mihi castitatem … sed noli modo*" ("give me chastity … but not yet"). Jenrick's remark was intended as a joke but it was not taken thus by Cherry, who was swift to protest on behalf of her client, St Augustine. Her accusation of blasphemy was spluttered forth with tremendous force and seriousness. The House did not quite know how to take it.

Even Cherry's frontbench colleague, Alison Thewliss, looked a little pop-eyed. Those of us who thought Cherry was a lapsed Catholic clearly need to reconsider. She has become the new grand inquisitor, a Thomasina de Torquemada. With a stalwart of the Wee Free church having only just been pipped to the altar as the SNP's new leader, the Nats have become the go-to party for eremites and anchoresses. It was left to Tim Farron (LD, Westmorland & Lonsdale), a more mouselike congregant, to note that St Augustine came from north Africa and would therefore have likely ended up in one of the government's new detainment camps if his papers were not in order. Jenrick said the camps would offer "a rudimentary form of accommodation". You do not have to be an habitue of TripAdvisor to know that "rudimentary" is a euphemism for "frightful dump".

Laising was in the chair because Mr Speaker, with Rishi Sunak and Sir Keir Starmer, was at Betty Boothroyd's funeral in Cambridgeshire. PMQs was therefore an occasion for the understudies, Dominic Raab facing Angela Rayner. The latter had a jaunty opening, noting that Raab — the notorious tomato-hurler — was plainly a fine person to promote the government's new focus on anti-social behaviour. Raab saw that one coming and replied: "I can assure the House I have never called anyone scum." That was his, and Rayner's, best moment. Neither of them was on sparkling form. The session belonged instead to Mhairi Black, making her debut as the SNP's new deputy leader at Westminster. She had Raab in trouble by asking him about a lobbying sting that has caught Matt Hancock (Ind, West Suffolk). Black, in shiny brown brogues, kept things short and pungent. Brevity is always the key. Few of them ever try it.

Raab was later asked about the death of Paul O'Grady, the drag queen and Radio 2 presenter. He managed to call him Paul Grayson. Oops. The House was scandalised. Getting a dead celeb's name wrong? That really was blasphemy.

By the way, it may have been no accident that the Boothroyd funeral was held on a Wednesday. When Tony Blair shifted PMQs to noon on Wednesdays, Madam Speaker disapproved. She thought the old twice-weekly time of Tuesday and Thursday afternoons was superior. As was her way, Betty contrived to have the last word.

Minister set to delay ruling on pushing back pensions

Chris Smyth Whitehall Editor

A decision on raising the state pension age is expected to be delayed today as an official review recommends an increase to 68 in the early 2040s.

There has been a dramatic fall in how long Britons can expect to live and Mel Stride, the work and pensions secretary, is expected to commission a further review to update figures on life expectancy after Covid.

The state pension age, 66, is legally scheduled to increase from 67 to 68 between 2044-46, but a previous independent review had recommended bringing that date forward to 2037-39.

A review by Baroness Neville-Rolfe due to be published today is expected to recommend a rise to 68 in the early 2040s, citing less optimistic life expectancy data. Stride is expected to avoid a firm decision, however, as concerns mount about the hit to life expectancy delivered by Covid. The Institute for Fiscal Studies warned last week that every year of delay after 2037 would cost the Treasury £8-9 billion.

A decision to raise the retirement age is now likely to come after a general election next year and a Conservative source said: "Pensions policy should be done by consensus and there is a reasonable argument for looking at this afresh in year one of a parliament rather than year five."

From April 6 the state pension will be worth £203.85 a week and triggers eligibility for other benefits such as the winter fuel allowance.

Life expectancy for today's fifty-somethings has fallen since a 2017 review, when a man born in 1971 was predicted to live to 85.6. This has fallen to 83.9 while for women the equivalent figures are 88.1 to 86.7.

Rising retirement ages have proved a boon to the Treasury, with the rise from 65 to 66 from 2018 estimated to save £5 billion a year. It came after a decision to increase the pension age for women from 60 to match that applied to men.

Old prison site to house migrants

Matt Dathan Home Affairs Editor
Ali Mitib

Up to 1,200 male migrants will be housed at the site of an old prison by the end of the year under government plans to move asylum seekers out of hotels.

As well as the migrants accommodated in HMP Northeye in Bexhill, East Sussex, a further 3,700 will be moved to RAF bases in Essex and Lincolnshire, including the former home of the Red Arrows and 617 Dambusters Squadron. Also used will be the Catterick Garrison barracks in Rishi Sunak's constituency — a sign the prime minister was "showing leadership on this issue", according to Robert Jenrick, the immigration minister.

Dorset county council said the Home Office had also opened talks with Portland Port over proposals to provide "floating accommodation" for migrants, including in a giant barge. The council said it had "serious concerns" over the suitability and location for the facility.

Bill Reeves, the port's chief executive, said the authority was liaising with the department. Richard Drax, the Tory MP for South Dorset, said barges were "utterly out of the question".

The Home Office said accommodation at the sites would meet "essential living needs and nothing more", with the aim of making crossing the Channel less attractive to migrants.

The sites will repurpose barrack blocks and portable cabins. "Basic" healthcare will be provided along with security, although the migrants will be allowed to come and go because they are not in detention facilities. There will be no curfew but migrants will get a phone call at 11pm to check their whereabouts if they are not at the site.

Jenrick confirmed in a Commons statement yesterday there were also plans to use vessels to house migrants. It is understood several barges have been identified, with the Liverpool company Bibby Marine expected to land the contract.

The plans were criticised by Tory MPs, including Huw Merriman, the rail minister, who has already raised concerns about plans to use the former prison in his Bexhill constituency.

James Cleverly, the foreign secretary, opposed plans to use the former RAF site in Wethersfield in his Braintree constituency, saying it "isn't the result my constituents and I wanted".

Advice drawn up by Home Office officials last year warned against the use of vessels to accommodate migrants because of suggestions that housing them in hotels was cheaper.

Dominic Raab, the deputy prime minister, said he had held "very positive" discussions with the European Court of Human Rights over efforts to reform its ability to suspend the government's proposed deportation flights to Rwanda.

How Sunak may stop the boats, Juliet Samuel, page 23
Barges for migrants, letters, page 26

PETER MACDIARMID/LNP



The disused HMP Northeye in Bexhill, East Sussex, is one of the sites acquired by the Home Office to house asylum seekers

Afghan pilot could be sent to Rwanda

Matt Dathan

Ministers have refused to rule out deporting an Afghan pilot who fought alongside British armed forces before escaping his war-torn country and arriving in the UK on a small boat.

The air force lieutenant, who flew 30 combat missions against the Taliban, could be sent to Rwanda after he travelled here illegally. He had been forced into hiding and said it was "impossible" to find a legal route to Britain.

Although eligible for deportation under the UK's existing inadmissibility rules, his case would not fall under the new Illegal Migration Bill, which makes it easier to deport people to third countries such as Rwanda. This would only apply to those who arrived illegally since March this year. However, the government has not ruled out Afghans being eligible for deportation to Rwanda since unveiling the policy last year.

Yesterday, Dominic Raab, the justice secretary and deputy prime minister, was unable to guarantee that the pilot would not be deported to Rwanda. When put to him that the man was "desperate," Raab told the BBC there were "safe and legal" ways for Afghans to claim asylum in the UK despite the dangers of asking the Taliban for permission to leave. "The rules for asylum applicants include vulnerable people from Afghanistan. We want to make sure there are safe and trusted routes."

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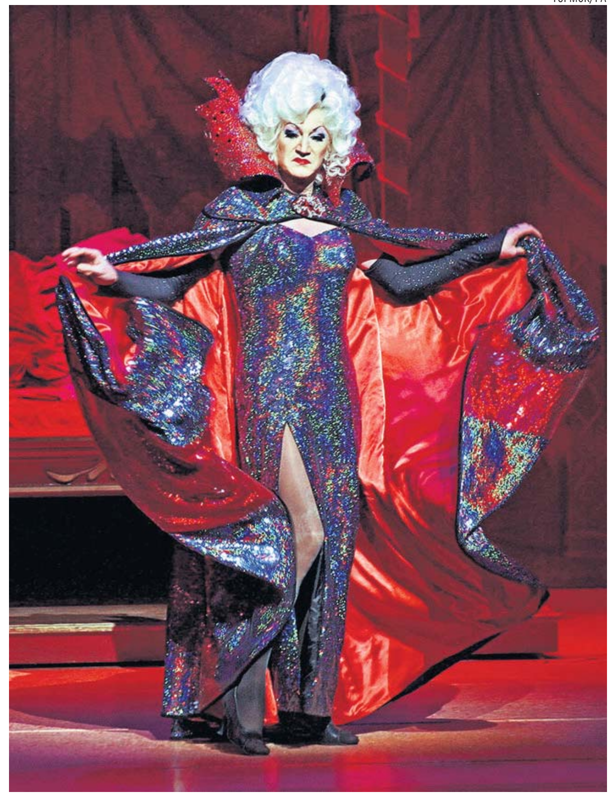
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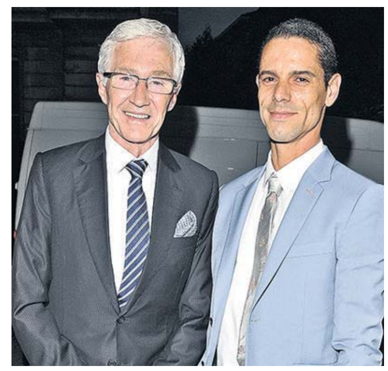
A savage tongue but a warm heart

Friends, fans and the Queen paid tribute to Paul O'Grady after his death aged 67, writes **Lucy Bannerman**



YUI MOK/PA





Paul O'Grady cuddles a canine in one of his last photographs at Edinburgh Playhouse. He rose to fame as the blonde drag performer Lily Savage and came to be close to the Queen, sharing a love of dogs. Away from the limelight he lived in a Kent village with his husband, Andre Portasio

"If I wanted your opinion, I'd slap it outta ya," Lily Savage used to say.

There was no such stopping the tributes yesterday, however, as friends, fans and royalty remembered Paul O'Grady, the entertainer, animal lover and creator of Birkenhead's blondest bombshell.

The Queen and Sir Elton John, as well as many of the younger drag acts who followed O'Grady's blazing trail, shared their memories of the TV and radio presenter, who died "unexpectedly but peacefully" on Tuesday evening, aged 67.

O'Grady became one of the few celebrities to prompt tributes from both Camilla and Cheryl Hole, the drag performer and self-styled Queen of Essex. It was a reminder of his boundary-breaking career that took his subversive, working-class drag act from the gay bars of Vauxhall to the chat show sofas and game show studios of mainstream television.

The royal family's Twitter account said: "Deeply saddened to hear of the death of Paul O'Grady, who worked closely with Her Majesty in support of Battersea [dogs and cats home], providing lots of laughter and many waggy-tailed memories."

Buckingham Palace said that the Queen and O'Grady bonded over their mutual love of dogs, adding that she would be sharing her sympathies with O'Grady's family in private.

John posted a picture of himself and O'Grady as his drag queen persona Lily Savage on Instagram.

He wrote: "Saddening news to hear of Paul O'Grady's passing this morning. A brilliant entertainer, wit, and supporter of LGBTQ+ rights and the fight against AIDS and HIV who I was fortunate enough to spend time with. Thank you for all the joy you brought into the world, Paul."



O'Grady had finished a stint playing Miss Hannigan in the musical *Annie* a few days ago and was to resume the role later this year. He joked last week on BBC Radio Scotland about the physical challenge of returning to the stage. "Don't take the elderly for granted," he said. "I'm no chicken. I'm 67, 68 this year, and I'm rocking around … doing *Easy Street* gasping for air."

His friend, Malcolm Prince, the radio producer, said O'Grady had been in typically lively spirits in the hours before his death. He tweeted: "Yesterday afternoon I popped round to Paul's for a catch-up. Surrounded by his beloved dogs, he was laughing, smiling and full of life."

Born in Birkenhead to an Irish-English Catholic family, O'Grady's alter ego was partly inspired his mother and the other sharp-tongued women of his childhood, such as his aunt Chris, who had "a mouth like a bee's arse" — it stung.

Before making it as "the Edith Piaf of daytime TV", O'Grady worked as a barman in a Manila brothel and a social worker for Camden council. His former colleague, Mark Downie, said he never forgot his roots.

He tweeted: "When we worked together at Ch4, Paul O'Grady insisted that new roles on his show were advertised in the local Job Centre. He wanted … everyone to be able to apply so they could get a break like he had." Lord Smith of Finsbury, the former Labour cabinet minister described by the Terrence Higgins Trust as the first openly HIV-positive MP, said O'Grady "fought nobly for things that were important".

In the Kent village of Aldington, where O'Grady lived with Andre Portasio, his husband, and their menagerie, people left bouquets, many honouring his television series *For the Love of Dogs*, set at Battersea animal shelter.

A neighbour said: "Paul was an inspiring gentleman. He loved his animals, always a great guy to talk to and a real loss for us all."

Obituary, page 49

Schofield's brother 'detailed sex acts'

Will Humphries
Southwest Correspondent

Phillip Schofield said he did not want to hear "any of the details" when his younger brother began telling him about engaging in sexual activity with a teenage boy, a court was told.

Timothy Schofield made the revelation in September 2021 while the pair were washing up after dinner.

The TV presenter said that when his brother continued he replied: "F***, stop!"

Phillip Schofield, 60, gave a statement to police after his brother, 54, was accused of sexually abusing a teenage boy for several years.

Exeter crown court was told that Timothy, a police IT technician, told his brother that he had watched pornography and masturbated with the boy on one occasion. He faces 11 charges of sexual offences against a child under 16 over three years from October 2016. He denies all the charges.

In a statement to police that was read out in court, Phillip Schofield, a co-host of ITV's *This Morning,* said his brother made the revelation during a visit after calling him in a distressed condition.

"Tim was in an extreme state of agitation," the TV presenter said in a statement to police given in December 2021.

Phillip Schofield's statement went on: "I was washing up and Tim was standing behind me and he said, 'You are going to hate me for what I am going to say'." Timothy Schofield allegedly told his brother that he and the boy "had their time together" and mentioned the pornography and sexual activity. Phillip continued: "I turned and said, 'What did you just say?' Tim said it was just this time and I told him it should never happen again."

The court was told the abuse came to light in November 2021, when the boy spoke to two different counsellors and the police were informed.

Timothy Schofield is accused of causing a child under 16 to watch sex acts and engage in sex acts. He also allegedly performed sex acts in front of the alleged victim.

Peter Binder, for the defence, said his client did not dispute that he and the boy would watch pornography together and each of them would masturbate. Binder claimed the boy was lying about being under 16 when the sexual activity began between them and was "exaggerating what had happened" when he claimed oral sex took place. The alleged victim said this was false. The trial continues.

Jail where 18 female staff had affairs with prisoners

Matt Dathan

Eighteen female staff at a prison in north Wales renowned for its liberal approach have had relationships with male inmates since the jail opened six years ago.

All have either been sacked or resigned after their affairs at HMP Berwyn, in Wrexham, were discovered and three have been jailed for misconduct in public office, a freedom of information request has revealed.

The figures take the total number of prison officers sacked for inappropriate relationships with inmates to 36 over the past three years. There were 19 in the previous four years.

The prison, with a capacity of about 2,000, described inmates as "residents", cells as "rooms" and gave inmates laptops on arrival.

The Prison Officers Association said many of the women had been exploited by "very experienced" prisoners and errors in recruitment meant governors did not conduct face-to-face interviews. They were selected instead over Zoom and using assessment tests.

The Ministry of Justice said that the figures were a result of a counter-corruption crackdown targeting staff having relationships with prisoners.

The Prison Service said: "The vast majority of staff are hardworking and honest but we are doing more than ever to catch the small number who break the rules."

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Millionaire accused of office assault was convicted over sex attack on Tube

Kieran Gair

A venture capitalist accused of assaulting a woman as she bent over a dishwasher in an office was previously convicted for sexually assaulting a passenger on the Tube, a court has heard.

Stefan Glaenzer, 61, is accused of thrusting himself at the woman in an office kitchen in Notting Hill, west London, in 2021.

Glaenzer co-founded Passion Capital in 2011 with Eileen Burbidge, who was the former prime minister Boris Johnson's digital adviser when he was mayor of London, and Robert Dighero.

The taxpayer-funded British Business Bank invested £17.5 million in Passion in 2015. Glaenzer, a serial entrepreneur, made £23 million when he sold the music streaming site Last.fm.

He has pleaded not guilty to one charge of sexual assault in this case.

Yesterday the complainant told Isleworth crown court that she "felt pressure behind her" as she put plates into the dishwasher at work and was "frozen in shock" after the alleged assault.

The court then heard that Glaenzer was convicted of sexually assaulting a 30-year-old female passenger on the Underground 11 years ago.

Jose Olivares-Chandler, for the prosecution, asked him: "Would you accept that you rubbed your private parts through your clothes on to the bottom of a female passenger?"

Glaenzer replied: "That's correct."

In relation to the latest claim, the prosecutor asked him: "Are you the sort of person who would have done what [the complainant] alleges?" — to which Glaenzer replied: "No."

Glaenzer told the jury that he was in an "infectious" mood before the alleged assault because he had closed a deal.

He said he had decided to go back to his desk because the queue for the coffee machine was too long. "When I made my way from the sink . . . I saw somebody standing between the kitchen and the dishwasher," he said.

Louise Sweet KC, for Glaenzer, asked him about the sequence of events that led up to him "bumping into" the complainant.

"We had started walking simultaneously and . . . I bumped into the lady," Glaenzer said, claiming that his "hip" had "pushed" her.

Passion Capital is one of Britain's highest profile start-up funders and is the major shareholder of Monzo, the banking app.

The trial continues.

Cannabis farmer got high hiding from police

A man who helped run a cannabis farm hid on a roof to evade police when the property was raided (Matilda Davies writes).

Officers descended on the house in the Kirkdale district of Liverpool following a tip-off from a locksmith. While police searched the terraced house, Etmond Lika, 32, escaped on to the roof through a skylight. He was eventually caught.

The officers discovered at least 200 cannabis plants in six rooms of the house. The cannabis growing installation was described as "plainly a sophisticated operation".

At Liverpool crown court, Lika admitted to one count of being concerned in the production of cannabis and was sentenced to two years and four months in jail. The drugs were ordered to be destroyed. Lika, from Albania, said he had arrived in Britain after paying €5,000 to cross the Channel on a small boat six months ago, hoping to build a better life.

Christopher Hopkins, for the prosecution, said: "The Crown frankly knows nothing else about this defendant."

He added: "Lika must have been motivated by some significant financial advantage and must have understood what was going on in the house."



LIVERPOOL ECHO

Etmond Lika fled through a skylight to the roof of the house as police searched for him. He was caught, eventually, and jailed

Lika had no previous convictions in the UK. A foreign criminal record was requested but not provided.

Olivia Beesley, Lika's barrister, said the defendant was offered £100 a day to live at the property. "He wants to work but he knows now that he should have done so through proper channels," she told the court, adding that he had no fixed abode.

She added: "He simply wishes to receive his sentence with grace and understands he must be punished for this kind of offending."

Judge Brian Cummings said: "You entered this country illegally, little or nothing is known about you. I note what was said in the case summary by reference to your police interview, and I quote, 'It was difficult to get an answer out of him, he continuously changed his account throughout the interview'."

Judge raises doubts over basis of Harry's case against newspapers

David Brown

A judge told the Duke of Sussex yesterday he may have to "adjust his expectations" of the value of an alleged confession by a witness in his privacy claim.

Harry claims that Gavin Burrows, a private investigator, had admitted phone hacking and car bugging in his legal action against the Daily Mail and The Mail on Sunday. Lurid admissions of Burrows's activities are disclosed in a witness statement made public yesterday, in which he appeared to describe The Mail on Sunday as "one of my biggest and most regular clients".

Burrows allegedly admitted targeting Harry, the actresses Sadie Frost and Elizabeth Hurley, and Sir Elton John. The statement says he charged £2,000 to tap a telephone and £3,000 to break into and bug a car.

He appeared to claim in the statement dated August 2021 that he did not target Harry directly but "put hardwire taps on and voicemail hacking of his friend Guy Pelly and doing loads on Chelsy Davy when he [Harry] was with her." In a second statement, however, dated last month, Burrows appeared to claim that he had never worked for Associated Newspapers, publisher of the two newspapers.

He wrote: "I wish to make clear that I was never instructed or commissioned by anyone at The Mail on Sunday or the Daily Mail to conduct unlawful information gathering on their behalf."

Burrows's signatures on the statements are different. The older document appears to have a computer-generated signature, whereas the one last month appears to have been signed with a pen.

The duke, John and his husband David Furnish, Hurley, Frost and Baroness Lawrence of Clarendon, the anti-racism campaigner, state that Burrows's original alleged confession was a catalyst for their legal claims against the newspapers. Mr Justice Nicklin told the claimants at a preliminary hearing: "They may have to adjust their expectation of Mr Burrows in light of the [latest] statement he made."

The judge asked if anyone had asked Burrows to explain the discrepancies. Adrian Beltrami KC, for Associated Newspapers, replied: "He says it's not true." Nicklin said: "Well there's a trial point if I have ever seen one."



The Duke of Sussex says he was a target for investigators

He suggested the discrepancy would have to be examined at a full trial. Beltrami said: "Can one take Mr Burrows's first statement to trial when it is completely contradicted by the second statement?"

He said three other private investigators alleged to have gathered information unlawfully for the publisher had not provided witness statements, while others had provided irrelevant information.

Harry did not appear at court for the third day of the hearing. He claims he was the victim of unlawful information gathering, including for an article about a girlfriend.

Beltrami said the claims were "too late", with some allegations dating back 30 years. There is normally a six-year time limit on bringing claims, he added. "The claims are rejected by the defendant in their entirety."

The judge questioned if the celebrities might have believed when the articles were published that they had been betrayed by a friend rather than that they had been the victim of unlawful information gathering. He asked if evidence by the newspapers' staff to the Leveson inquiry into press standards that they did not gather information unlawfully would have assured them there was no wrongdoing.

Harry says he was unaware he was allegedly targeted by private investigators until his wife sued The Mail on Sunday in 2018. The hearing continues.

Equality is overrated, says Starkey

Constance Kampfner

David Starkey has said that "human beings should never be equal" during a debate at a literary festival.

Speaking at the Oxford Literary Festival yesterday, the historian, 78, said: "Human beings are not equal, shouldn't be equal and will never be equal. We differ in strength, as we are discovering in the whole debate about trans [people] and women; we differ in intelligence."

Starkey said human rights were a "catastrophe" and described Britain as a "quasi-apartheid society".

He said: "The catastrophe has been we've introduced human rights, like gay rights, like black rights, like trans rights, because they are inherently divisive."

Starkey made his comments three years after the University of Cambridge terminated his honorary fellowship and Harper Collins dropped him for "abhorrent" comments about slavery.

Audience members at the festival expressed surprise that Starkey had been invited to speak.



ELLIOTT FRANKS

Entrée de ballet Trainees at the English National Ballet School rehearse ahead of last night's performance at Sadler's Wells



Fruity vapes that lure in children could be banned

Kat Lay Health Editor
Chris Smyth Whitehall Editor

The government has pledged to clamp down on children's access to vapes, with reports that ministers are considering a ban on brightly coloured, disposable, fruit-flavoured products.

But some experts have warned that "excessive meddling" in the vape market risked undermining progress towards smoking reduction targets, with fears that it might become harder to promote the devices as a tool to quitting cigarettes. Campaigners for and against further restrictions have urged better enforcement of current laws that ban the sale of vapes to children.

A spokeswoman for the Department of Health and Social Care said: "While vaping is a preferable alternative to smoking for adults, we are concerned about the rise in youth vaping, particularly the increasing use of disposable vaping products.

"We are exploring a range of measures to address this, including clamping down on children accessing vapes illegally, and those who are getting them hooked on nicotine. It's right for the government to do all it can to protect children from addiction."

The Sun reported that Neil O'Brien, the public health minister, plans to launch a call for evidence within days. The newspaper said that the review would look at the "appearance and characteristics" of vaping products, including branding, marketing, colour and flavours. It will also look at advertising on social media and whether companies are targeting young people.

Deborah Arnott, the chief executive of Action on Smoking and Health (Ash), the health charity, said that she was pleased the government was "finally" heeding its warnings about "gaping loopholes in the regulation of vapes". Ash has recommended increasing tax on cheap disposable vapes to make them less affordable and banning brightly coloured packaging featuring cartoon characters and names like "tutti frutti".

Arnott said: "Vaping is for adults wanting to quit smoking. It's unnecessary and unacceptable for vapes to be packaged like children's sweets — but new regulation will take time. What is needed immediately is additional funding to help Trading Standards enforce the existing laws banning sales to under-18s."

Christopher Snowdon, the head of lifestyle economics at the Institute of Economic Affairs think tank, said: "Millions of smokers have quit thanks to vaping, and youth smoking rates are exceptionally low. These achievements should not be taken for granted. Excessive meddling in the vape market risks going backwards."

Simon Clark, the director of Forest, the smokers' lobby group, said: "If the government's goal is to reduce smoking rates, banning flavoured vapes would be a massive own goal. Vaping has been a huge success story, with millions of smokers choosing to switch to a far less harmful product. Flavours are an important part of the appeal of vaping to adult smokers who wish to quit."

Jeremy Hunt, the chancellor, rejected a tax on disposable vapes in the Budget but the government is now expected to set out a combination of new restrictions on products deemed attractive to children, alongside tougher enforcement of age rules.

A senior government source said: "There are signs that vaping is ticking up among younger people and there is particular concern around disposables, on environmental grounds as well. We need to make sure it doesn't become a way into vaping for younger people."

Senior medics sound alarm over junior doctors' walkout

Chris Smyth

Top doctors have warned striking junior colleagues about the impact on their patients of next month's industrial action, as concern mounts in the NHS about a planned four-day walkout.

However, the leaders of the medical profession stopped short of condemning the strike, acknowledging junior doctors' concerns about working conditions. Junior doctors will walk out of all areas of care including A & E units for 96 hours after Easter in an escalation of their pay dispute.

NHS chiefs have blamed 72-hour walkouts this month for the impending failure to hit a waiting list target. The strike resulted in 175,000 appointments and procedures being cancelled. Many hospitals units operate with only about half of normal staffing levels during junior doctor strikes.

However, while nursing unions have agreed a pay deal, talks between the British Medical Association and Steve Barclay, the health secretary, collapsed in acrimony last week. Doctors said Barclay was refusing to listen, while he accused them of a "childish" insistence on a 35 per cent pay rise. Ministers acknowledge the need to find extra cash but are refusing to take pay back to where it was in 2008 in real terms, which Rishi Sunak has described as "unreasonable and unaffordable".

The Academy of Medical Royal Colleges, which sets professional standards for Britain's 200,000 doctors, urged both sides to reach a deal. The academy, which usually stays out of pay disputes, said that it was "concerned that a solution has not yet been reached and about the anticipated impact on NHS services and patients with a new round of proposed industrial action imminent".

The doctors said that medical cover for this month's strike had come "at the expense of their other work".

They added: "With the inevitable very large numbers of appointments or procedures that will be cancelled, this action will further inconvenience and distress patients."

Chris Hopson, chief strategy officer at NHS England, said that before strikes, the health service had been "absolutely on target" to hit a goal of eliminating waits of more than 78 weeks for routine care by the end of March. That target is expected to be missed by about 10,000 patients.

Musk: Rein in AI before it outsmarts us all

Mark Sellman
Technology Correspondent

Elon Musk is among 1,000 technology executives and experts who have called for an immediate pause in designing powerful artificial intelligence systems because of the fear that they will "outsmart and replace us".

Musk, boss of Twitter and Tesla, has been joined by Steve Wozniak, co-founder of Apple, Yuval Noah Harari, the author of *Sapiens*, and AI researchers to warn that the industry is moving too fast. Musk has sounded similar warnings before but the prominence of other signatories indicates a growing sense of unease at the speed of change.

The latest update of the AI chatbot ChatGPT has taken it from the bottom 10 per cent in exams for the US Bar to the top.

In an open letter from the Future of Life Institute, Musk and the others wrote that AI labs were "locked in an out-of-control race to develop and deploy ever more powerful digital minds that no one — not even their creators — can understand, predict, or reliably control". They said that unless there was a delay to make systems safer and allow regulators to formulate a legal framework, the machines could flood the world with disinformation and "automate away all the jobs".

They asked: "Should we develop non-human minds that might eventually outnumber, outsmart, obsolete and replace us? Should we risk loss of control of our civilisation? Such decisions must not be delegated to unelected tech leaders."

The tech world is in a race to develop and release AI systems that was catalysed by the creation of ChatGPT by OpenAI, a company backed by Microsoft. Google has released Bard, its own chatbot, and there has been huge investment in other AI companies by the tech industry, which has been desperate for a new platform of innovation.

The new gold rush has concerned many who believe that ethics and safety are being sidelined. They accuse the companies developing AI of a lack of transparency. Microsoft disbanded its AI ethics and safety team in January, causing alarm, although the company insisted that it comprised only a fraction of those working on responsible AI.

Musk has been the most famous critic of OpenAI, which he co-founded as a non-profit body in 2015 to promote and develop artificial intelligence in a way that would benefit humanity. He split from it in 2018 and the organisation has since set up a "capped" profit-making company that has been backed by Microsoft. Investors can make a fixed return on their capital. Musk has tweeted: "I'm still confused as to how a non-profit to which I donated [roughly] $100 million somehow became a $30 billion market cap for-profit."

Sam Altman, chief executive of OpenAI, shrugged off the open letter, telling The Wall Street Journal that GPT-4, the latest version, underwent six months of safety testing. "In some sense, this is preaching to the choir," he said. "We have, I think, been talking about these issues the loudest, with the most intensity, for the longest."

Yann LeCun, head of AI at Meta, said that he "disagreed with the premise" of the letter, which called for a temporary stop on training systems more powerful than GPT-4. If the industry did not pause its efforts, governments should step in, the letter said. Other signatories included the British AI researcher Stuart Russell, Emad Mostaque, chief executive of the British AI firm Stable Diffusion, and researchers from DeepMind, which is based in London and owned by Google.

The British government has published its AI white paper, setting out the framework for its regulatory regime. It has indicated more of a light-touch approach than the EU, delegating much of the work to industry-level regulators. The white paper suggests that one way to regulate AI would be the statutory reporting of computing power over a certain size. Brussels has been more prescriptive, identifying certain technologies that are higher-risk, such as "deepfakes", deceptively realistic fake images, which will require greater regulation. Canada has gone down a similar track, but the US wants a more voluntary framework.

Some of the signatories to the letter, including Mostaque and Gary Marcus, a New York University professor, said they agreed with its spirit but not all of its sentiments.

Ian Hogarth, co-author of the State of AI report, said there was a short time for governments to act. "Obviously, as time goes on, and the amount of hardware you need goes down, as the number of models proliferate, it's much harder to wrestle back control," he said.

Azeem Azhar, chairman of the research group Exponential View, welcomed the letter. "Pause or not, we need public dialogues about what AI could mean in the short and long term," he said. "This letter could encourage better co-operation amongst the high-level research lab, academia and government to emphasise … the right safety measures."

Some AI experts were critical. Arvind Narayanan, professor of computer science at Princeton, tweeted: "This open letter — ironically but unsurprisingly — further fuels AI hype and makes it harder to tackle real, already occurring AI harms."

Last week Twitter was flooded with images generated by AI depicting the arrest of Donald Trump. Separately, fabricated images of the Pope have gone viral online, garnering millions of views on social media. The photos showed the 86-year-old wrapped up against the elements in a stylish puffer jacket and silver jewelled crucifix.

A huge opportunity but a regulatory challenge, leading article, page 27







Fake images of the Pope and the supposed arrest of Donald Trump generated by AI have gone viral. Elon Musk is a leading voice of warning

Suspected killer 'had fled hospital'

Will Humphries
Southwest Correspondent

A man reported missing from a mental health unit has been arrested on suspicion of murder after a church warden was killed in a village.

The victim, named locally as Beryl Purdy, 86, was found after reports of a burglary at the home where she lived with her husband, Peter, 88.

Villagers in Broomfield, near Taunton, Somerset, said they felt "anger and disgust" at the death of the pensioner, who had worked at St Mary and All Saints church and helped to run the village hall.

Purdy, who was known as Bez, was found seriously injured on Monday afternoon. She died at the scene. Officers arrested a man aged in his thirties on suspicion of murder three hours later in Broomfield. The man had been reported to Avon and Somerset police as a missing person from a mental health unit.

The case has been referred to the Independent Office for Police Conduct to investigate. The suspect was moved to a secure mental health unit after he was deemed not fit to be interviewed.



Beryl Purdy, 86, was found with serious injuries

The death is the second tragedy to hit the family. Purdy's daughter, Alison, a police officer, was killed in a horse riding accident in 2012 at the age of 46.

Residents said Purdy was the main carer for her husband, who has severe mobility problems. They said he was "distraught". The couple's son and his wife were with him.

A villager said: "We don't know what happened but people are feeling angry and disgusted that a woman of Bez's years has lost her life."

Avon and Somerset police said: "A murder investigation led by the major crime investigation team was launched after a woman sadly died at a property in Broomfield, near Bridgwater.

"Officers were initially called to the scene following a report of a burglary in progress at around 5.45pm. On arrival they found a woman in her eighties badly injured."

A post-mortem examination was held yesterday but formal identification did not take place.

Man murdered pensioner for sleeping in wrong bed

Laurence Sleator

The owner of a seaside home has been found guilty of murdering a 71-year-old tourist who mistook his home for her B&B and fell asleep in his bed.

David Redfern, 46, dragged Margaret Barnes downstairs by her ankles before kicking and stamping on her, causing severe liver damage.

Caernarfon crown court was told Barnes, from Birmingham, had been drinking with friends at Barmouth, Gwynedd, in July last year.

She was planning to stay at a B&B in the street where Redfern lived and mistakenly went into his house. Michael Jones, for the prosecution, said this was "a mistake that ultimately cost her her life". Barnes had her false teeth on the bedside table when Redfern found her.

The court was told he called the police before dragging her down the stairs and breaking her ribs.

In a CCTV video she can be heard saying: "I'm sorry." Redfern, who weighs 21 stone, is heard telling his partner he "didn't mean to kill her".

His partner replied: "You could have just escorted her out. It's an old lady."

Redfern, who had a history of anger management problems, denied murder but was found guilty. Mr Justice Bourne said he must expect a life sentence when he is sentenced.

After the trial, Barnes's family said she was a much-loved wife, mother and grandmother.

News

Supermarket pork supplier accused over 'rotten' meat

George Sandeman

A criminal investigation has been started after allegations that a rogue meat supplier mixed rotten pork with fresh meat and falsely labelled foreign meat as British before selling it to supermarkets and food manufacturers.

The investigation by the Food Standards Agency comes after a report in Farmers Weekly which alleged that the company, which has not been named for legal reasons, sold the mislabelled pork until at least the end of 2020.

Former employees of the Midlands-based company said there were also instances of rotting pork being mixed with fresh produce before processing, meat being thawed on the factory floor and paperwork falsified.

Among the products that used meat supplied by the company were ready meals, quiches and sandwiches that were sold in supermarkets including Tesco, Asda, Co-op and Marks & Spencer.

Another company that used the meat supplier was the food manufacturer Oscar Mayer, whose clients include Sainsbury's, Aldi, Ikea and Subway.

The FSA said it was examining several lines of inquiry regarding the alleged fraud, including possible breaches of food hygiene rules.

Andrew Quinn, deputy head of the national food crime unit at the FSA, said: "[We are] carrying out a criminal investigation into how one supplier allegedly provided products labelled as British when they were in fact sourced from South America and Europe.

"We are looking into all new lines of inquiry with our partner organisations, including any potential food hygiene breaches, and acting where necessary to protect public health."

On behalf of the affected supermarkets, the British Retail Consortium said: "Whilst we cannot comment on an ongoing investigation, retailers will support the FSA with its investigation."

A spokesman for Oscar Mayer said: "All our meat sourcing is from suppliers with whom we have … long-established relationships, are retailer-approved and hold appropriate certification.

"We undertake regular, unannounced auditing visits at all of our suppliers, reviewing the traceability of random batches of product supplied to us … The allegations against this … meat processor are shocking. However, in fairness, we have not found any issues relating to country of origin, nor any other discrepancies relating to our supplies from this or any other company."

Slice of bread saltier than a packet of crisps

Kat Lay Health Editor

A slice of bread typically contains more salt than a packet of ready salted crisps, campaigners have said.

Researchers from Action on Salt, based at Queen Mary University of London, looked at 242 sliced breads sold in supermarkets. Three quarters contained as much salt in each slice as a 25g packet of ready salted crisps — or more.

The campaigners urged Rishi Sunak to set mandatory salt-reduction targets, replacing the present voluntary system, to reduce deaths from strokes and heart disease.

The majority of loaves' salt content was below the 2024 maximum salt target of 1.01g per 100g, set by the Department of Health and Social Care in 2020. However, Action on Salt said the large variations suggested that the targets were "far too lenient".

According to UK guidelines, adults should eat no more than 6g of salt a day — about one teaspoon. The average intake is about 8.4g.

The saltiest loaf was Hovis white with starter dough, with 1.48g of salt in 100g.

TIMES PHOTOGRAPHER JAMES GLOSSOP



Good investment A 19th-century Italian micromosaic panel showing the Temple of Vesta is expected to fetch up to £7,000 at auction in Ripon, North Yorkshire



Representative Example	Duration of Device Plan	Upfront Cost	Monthly Device Payment	Credit Amount	Total amount payable for device	Interest rate (fixed)	Representative APR	Cash price (to buy outright)	Airtime Plan, today to Mar 2023	Airtime Plan, Apr 2023 to Mar 2024	Airtime Plan, Apr 2024 to Mar 2025
iPhone 14 128GB	36 months	£30	£12.58	£452.88	£482.88	0%	0%	£482.88	£25	£25 + RPI announced in Feb 2023 = Price A	Price A + RPI announced in Feb 2024

***Each year your Airtime Plan will be increased by the Retail Price Index (RPI) rate of inflation announced in February plus 3.9%. If RPI is negative, we'll only apply the 3.9%. You'll see this increase on your April 2023 bill onwards. See o2.co.uk/prices.** £12.58 Device Plan for 36 months and £25 monthly rolling Airtime Plan. £30 upfront. Purchase the iPhone 14 128GB directly from O2 and save up to £9.16 a month on your new device plan when you trade in an iPhone. £12.58 per month achieved by trading in your old iPhone device and receiving up to £330.00 in trade in value, spread across a 36 month device plan. Quoted monthly saving may be adjusted if the trade-in device received by us differs from the submitted device description. Trade-in value based on payable amount on all traded in iPhones between January 2021 and December 2021. £21.74 monthly device plan cost for non trade in customers. Your device must pass our checklist. The value of your trade in will depend on the model and condition. Terms apply, see https://www.o2.co.uk/termsandconditions/mobile/o2-recycle. **O2 Refresh custom plans:** Direct purchases only. Pay the cash price for your device or spread the cost over 3 to 36 months (excludes dongles). The device cost will be the same whatever you choose. There may be an upfront cost. You can pay off your Device Plan at any time and choose to keep your Airtime Plan, upgrade it, or leave. If you are in the first 24 months of your Device Plan and you cancel your Airtime Plan you will have to pay the remainder of your Device Plan in full. After 24 months you can keep your Airtime Plan, upgrade it, or end it without affecting your Device Plan. Devices subject to availability. 0% APR. Finance subject to status and credit checks. 18+. Direct Debit. Credit provided by Telefónica UK Ltd, SL1 4DX. Telefónica UK is authorised and regulated by the FCA for consumer credit and insurance. Terms apply, see o2.co.uk/terms. **O2 Switch Up:** New & upgrading customers on an O2 Custom Plan (bolt-on charged at £3.99 a month) or Plus Plan tariff (charge included within plan). Subject to availability, status, credit checks & payment by direct debit. This may only be added at POS or within 14 days of purchase/upgrade, it may be cancelled at any point & will be removed automatically if existing device plan is paid off. Eligible customers may swap their existing handset at any time via an O2 store, subject to device condition. Customers may only take out a new Customer Plan or Plus Plan following a successful device swap. New contract price may be higher than existing depending on plan chosen. Customers not eligible for O2 Recycle offers when using O2 Switch Up. For full terms; o2.co.uk/termsandconditions/mobile/o2-switch-up

Insomniacs can outrun heart trouble by exercising

Eleanor Hayward
Health Correspondent

After a bad night's sleep, the thought of dragging yourself out of bed to go for a run can seem especially unappealing.

However, a study has found that exercise becomes even more important if you have insomnia as it offsets the negative health consequences of not getting enough sleep.

Sleeping less than six hours a night was shown to significantly increase the likelihood of dying from heart disease, but this risk disappears in people who do plenty of exercise.

The study looked at 92,221 adults in the UK Biobank database with an average age of 62, who wore accelerometers monitoring their exercise and measuring hours of sleep per night.

During a follow-up period of seven years, 3,080 of the participants died, mainly from cancer or heart disease.

Deaths were more common in those who slept less than six hours, classified as short sleepers, and in "long sleepers" who slept more than eight hours. But exercising for two and a half hours a week, including jogging, swimming and cycling, was found to "completely" undo the excess death risks associated with being a bad sleeper.

People who slept less than six hours a night were 52 per cent more likely to die of heart disease than normal sleepers, and 31 per cent more likely to die of any cause. But this difference in death risks between good and bad sleepers almost disappeared among those who met exercise targets set by the NHS and World Health Organisation.

These guidelines state that adults should aim for 150 minutes of moderate intensity exercise, or 75 minutes of vigorous activity, per week. Only 61 per cent of the adults in the study did this.

The study, published in the European Journal of Preventive Cardiology, concluded that doctors should reinforce the importance of exercise for people with insomnia, or those working night shifts. Dr Jihui Zhang, the lead author, said: "The study showed that increased physical activity levels weakened the mortality risks associated with short or long sleep duration. Our findings suggest that health promotion efforts targeting both physical activity and sleep duration may be more effective in preventing or delaying premature death in middle-aged and older adults than focusing on one behaviour alone.

"In an ideal scenario, people would always get healthy amounts of both sleep and physical activity. However, our study indicates that getting sufficient exercise may partially offset the detrimental impact of missing a good night's sleep. A sufficient amount of physical activity would be considered as a practical and feasible strategy to partly compensate for the harmful effects resulting from unhealthy sleep."

Seven per cent of the adults in the group slept less than six hours a night on average, while 20 per cent slept more than eight hours.

Scientists believe a lack of sleep increases inflammation, high blood pressure and stress hormones in the body, causing long-term heart damage and weakening the immune system.

The new research said exercise "attenuates or eliminates" these consequences of poor sleep, by reducing inflammatory responses in the body and keeping the heart strong and healthy.

Sleeping too little has been shown to increase the risk of suffering heart attacks and strokes, with insomnia also linked to type 2 diabetes and depression. A landmark study last year, based on 7,200 adults in France, found those who slept well were 75 per cent less likely to develop heart disease than those who struggled badly with insomnia.

The research suggested efforts to promote better sleep could significantly reduce rates of heart disease, which affects 7.6 million people in the UK and is the nation's biggest killer.

Despite the link between sleep and physical health, it can be hard to identify cause and effect. Scientists are divided on whether poor sleep causes certain diseases such as heart failure to develop, or if they are both symptoms of other underlying factors such as stress.

TMS

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O'Grady song wasn't pet hit

As a dog-loving disc jockey, Paul O'Grady combined his interests in animals and music at home. Sadly, it was seldom appreciated. A couple of years ago the broadcaster took up the ukulele, which drew strange looks from his rescue dogs. O'Grady then produced a bugle to test his lung power. He said: "They vanished, heading to Battersea saying, 'Take us back!'" Undaunted, he took his ukulele outdoors and tried to serenade a flock of sheep by playing *You Are My Sunshine*. "They made a quick exit," he sighed. "Philistines! Obviously not music-lovers." Appropriately, the final record that O'Grady played on air, for a Christmas show on Boom Radio, was about animals, if rather unique ones. It was *Wombling Merry Christmas*.

The election of Humza Yousaf as first minister in Scotland, along with Rishi Sunak in Downing Street, proved historically interesting for Anand Menon, professor of foreign affairs at King's College London. He tweeted: "There was much excitement in the family WhatsApp group at the prospect of an Indian and a Pakistani bringing about the partition of Britain."

LENTEN PERVERSIONS
The Anglican priest and author Fergus Butler-Gallie admits in his new book *Touching Cloth* that he used to take up vice for Lent. Having forgone steak and cigarettes, he would compensate by indulging in minor bad habits, such as lottery scratchcards. "There is a naughty thrill in low-key gambling," he says. The trouble is that he started to win and, as he says, "it is bad form to collect winnings while wearing a clerical collar". Instead he wandered the streets, handing out winning scratchcards to the homeless like Dale Winton in a cassock. My own Lent is similar: I always resolve to stop drinking and spend each of the next 40 days starting from scratch.

SHERRY'S NO TRIFLE
One person who needs to take up drink is Carol Ann Duffy, who told Scala Radio that she has a couple of hundred bottles of sherry in her garage, the proceeds of being poet laureate, which ended in 2019. "I really love sherry," insisted Duffy, below, but the stipend of a "butt of sack", or 720 bottles, introduced by Charles I and revived when Ted Hughes was the national versifier, is far too much for a casual tippler. Perhaps she can shift it at the Coronation. Hughes gave some of his to the Queen Mother, who wrote back: "A crate of oloroso — sounds like a dream!" Though she may have preferred Dubonnet.

Another theological typo has been sent in by Father Joseph Bibby, who says the 2011 Missal for use in Catholic dioceses in Australia offered prayers "in times of draught", not "drought". It was not clear if that referred to the need to shut a window or was a comment on the quality of Australian lager.

OLD BOYS AND GIRLS NETWORK
It is not only Tory MPs who flash the old school tie. Welcoming Chris Patten to a select committee hearing on the Gary Lineker tweets affair, Labour's Rupa Huq told the former BBC chairman that it was "good to see an old St Benny's alumni [sic]". Patten, who attended St Benedict's in Ealing, beamed despite Huq's appalling Latin. "I was at [the neighbouring] Notting Hill Girls' School," Huq told him. "We used to borrow a Benny's boy every summer." For the school play, she clarified.



PATRICK KIDD



News

Climate change is 'biggest long-term threat to health'

Kat Lay Health Editor

Britain's leading doctors have warned that climate change poses the biggest long-term risk to human health.

The Royal College of Physicians has urged the government to go further with its environmental efforts, saying that action by national governments will have the greatest impact on climate change.

The college says in a report that the government should prioritise a transition from fossil fuels, redirecting all fossil fuel investments and subsidies towards renewable energy sources and technologies.

It recommends that everyone should have green space within ten minutes of their home, and that infrastructure is in place to meet the government's aim that half of all journeys in towns and cities should be walked or cycled by 2030. It calls for a robust and credible net-zero strategy to meet the UK's commitments.

The college said such action would bring improvements to population health, such as by reducing air pollution or encouraging more physical activity while travelling, and "potentially large savings for the NHS".

It should reduce health inequalities because people from poorer backgrounds are often more exposed to pollution from living by busy roads or in poor housing, the report adds.

Dr Sarah Clarke, president of the Royal College of Physicians, said: "Climate change represents the most significant challenge facing society, not just in the UK but globally.

"Meeting this challenge will require us all … to make changes to how we live and behave but determined action, particularly by governments, industry and public services such as the NHS, can make a meaningful difference.

"The government has taken a number of important steps in recent years to tackle climate change but we want it to go even further. Reducing and ultimately eliminating our use of fossil fuels is a linchpin of this and must be a central priority in government policymaking, underpinned by the necessary investment."

The NHS has set the aim of becoming the first net-zero national health service. It is responsible for about 40 per cent of the UK's public sector emissions. The report recommends that "initiatives to reduce the environmental impact within the NHS must be appropriately funded".



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PM's home targeted by wave of pool protesters

Matilda Davies

Greenpeace activists wearing scuba gear, swimwear and mermaid costumes queued up outside Rishi Sunak's manor house to protest about his electricity usage.

Two weeks ago it was revealed that the prime minister privately paid for his local grid to be upgraded to meet the power demands of the £400,000 pool on his £2 million grade II listed home in Richmond, North Yorkshire.

The demonstration was organised to bring attention to Sunak's electricity usage, as many Britons face soaring energy costs and forced prepayment meter installations.

Philip Evans, a Greenpeace UK climate campaigner, said:

"Sadly, we weren't invited for a swim by the prime minister today. It's all well and good that he's upgraded the local grid to power his private pool, but our national grid is in urgent need of attention. We need a smart grid that can unleash the power of cheap, homegrown renewables, so we can slash our energy bills and bring down carbon emissions in line with the UK's climate targets."

Today the government is expected to offer oil and gas companies windfall tax relief, in a bid to boost investment and improve the country's energy security.

Greenpeace UK says this announcement will do nothing for the country's energy security, and would be disastrous for the climate.

Evans said an improved national grid "should be a public good, not the private luxury of millionaires".

Sunak's upgrade to the grid is estimated to have cost tens of thousands of pounds, on top of the cost of heating the 12m pool. Construction of the pool finished recently, after the installation of a gym and tennis courts on the property.

"While Sunak will enjoy doing lengths in his warm pool, the rest of us are stuck with an outdated power network, not fit for purpose, that's blocking the rollout of more cheap and clean renewables," Evans said.

Community Leisure UK, which represents 880 pools across the country, previously warned that up to half of those pools could be forced to close due to rising energy costs, after Downing Street announced its plan to drop leisure centres from its energy bills discount scheme.

"Securing green energy for all should be the focus of the government this week," Evans said.

"Instead, they're approving new oil drilling and giving tax breaks to fossil fuel giants, proving they really are out of their depth when it comes to tackling the climate and energy crisis."

The National Audit Office previously warned that household bills could rise further if the government continues to delay plans to decarbonise the grid by 2035.



Greenpeace activists in swimwear at Rishi Sunak's house in Richmond, North Yorkshire,

Drought sees hopes dry up for butterflies



ALAMY



The dry summer last year was bad news for the offspring of small tortoiseshells and green-veined whites, above right

Last year's rain-free summer could mean a butterfly-free spring for some species, scientists said as they released the results of the UK's annual butterfly survey (Tom Whipple writes).

However, they said they could not know for sure how badly species were affected and the consequences for future years until the insects started to emerge from pupae. "The signs in these data are that there will be a big impact," Richard Fox, from the University of Exeter, said.

The annual UK butterfly monitoring scheme collates volunteer reports from 3,000 sites. It found that the green-veined white, small white, small tortoiseshell, peacock and brimstone all started the year strongly, but then had a marked decline.

However, some previously endangered butterflies were doing well and the early warm weather benefited many species.

Some, such as the dark green fritillary, even had a bumper year.

The problem lies in what happens next, once they have found mates.

"It's their offspring that are in real trouble in a drought, because if the plants that they are completely reliant upon shrivel up and die, there's literally nothing for the caterpillars to eat," Fox said.

He and his colleagues look at spreadsheets, but they know that the data they really need is buried in leaf litter, soil and bark, ready to greet the sun and wriggle into life.

Weather, page 57

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LUCY CARTWRIGHT/GREENPEACE





protest against his electricity usage

Melting Antarctic ice risks starving ocean of nutrients

Rhys Blakely Science Correspondent

A dramatic shift in the flow of deep sea waters around Antarctica threatens to starve large parts of the world's oceans of nutrients and oxygen within decades, scientists have warned.

New research, the first to use a high resolution representation of the ocean and sea ice, focused on "overturning circulation", in which enormous volumes of cold, dense water sink into the ocean depths close to the poles. That water, enriched with oxygen, carbon and nutrients, returns to the upper ocean at lower latitudes, where it sustains marine ecosystems.

About 250 trillion tonnes of cold, dense, salty, oxygen-rich water sinks to the depths of the oceans near Antarctica each year, then spreads northwards into the Indian, Pacific and Atlantic oceans. "If the oceans had lungs, this would be one of them," said Professor Matthew England, of the University of New South Wales Sydney, a co-author of the study, which is published in Nature.

The deep ocean current has remained relatively stable for thousands of years but the report suggests it is being disrupted by volumes of fresh water melting from Antarctica's ice sheets. This reduces the saltiness of ocean water, making it less dense so it sinks more slowly, leading to less overturning circulation.

The study predicts that if global emissions continue on their present course, the volume of cold water that sinks to the depths will be reduced by about 40 per cent by 2050. With a collapse of the deep ocean current, waters deeper than about 4,000 metres would stagnate, profoundly altering the circulation of heat, fresh water, oxygen, carbon and nutrients.

"This would trap nutrients in the deep ocean, reducing the nutrients available to support marine life near the ocean surface," England said. A rapid cut in carbon emissions could avoid the worst effects, he added.

Dr Steve Rintoul, of the Australian Antarctic Program Partnership, said: "Direct measurements confirm that warming of the deep ocean is indeed already under way."

Water firms' sewage breaches double in year

Clean it up WATER CAMPAIGN

Adam Vaughan Environment Editor

The number of times water companies breached their permits on sewage-spilling storm overflows more than doubled last year, an increase described as a "national scandal".

Southern Water was the worst offender with 195 breaches in 2022. Campaigners said the firm, which was fined a record £90 million in 2021 for breaches, should face "serious sanctions".

Environment Agency figures due out tomorrow will show a 19 per cent fall last year in the number of times that untreated sewage spilt from storm overflows, which are designed to act as relief valves during heavy rain. Most of the 300,000-plus spills were permitted by the environmental regulator. However, figures from Rebecca Pow, the water minister, reveal the number of breaches of storm overflow permits rose sharply, from 273 in 2021 to 554 last year.

Breaches, which can be triggered by firms releasing raw sewage from pipes when there has been no rain or snow, rose for all water companies. Such "dry spills" are typically a result of blockages in the sewer network and are not supposed to happen. Of the 554 breaches, 392 were linked to dry spills.

Tim Farron, the Liberal Democrat environment spokesman, who requested the data, said: "This is a national scandal. These polluting firms are breaching their permits on a daily basis … all while pocketing massive profits."

Yorkshire Water and United Utilities, which covers the northwest, were the second and third worst offenders, with 62 and 52 breaches respectively. Northumbrian Water had the least, with 27.

The new figures cover breaches for all permits concerning storm overflows at sewage treatment works and on the sewer network. Breaches can lead to enforcement action by the Environment Agency through prosecutions in the courts. Companies were fined almost £140 million between 2015 and 2021.

Alan Lovell, chairman of the Environment Agency, wants a greater use of civil penalties instead, which would be quicker to impose and require a lower burden of proof. They cannot yet be levied for such incidents but a consultation this spring is likely to change that.

The former environment secretary Ranil Jayawardena proposed lifting the limit for the penalties from £250,000 to £250 million. Lovell has said £10 million to £25 million would be appropriate. A spokesman for Southern Water said it "takes its compliance obligations very seriously. We are investing £2 billion between 2020 and 2025 to improve our performance".

Water UK, the industry body, said: "Breaches of overflow permits are rare, these figures suggest they have reduced by almost 60 per cent since 2020."

Defra said: "Our regulators will not hesitate to take action to clean up our waters, but we know that more needs to be done, which is why we will be launching a consultation on increased penalties for polluters."

Tide of troubles keeps rising for water monopolies, pages 40-41



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DANNY LAWSON/PA



Let it shine Hannah Thomas holds a recusant chalice dating from the 1630s. It will be part of an Easter exhibition at the Bar Convent Living Heritage Centre in York

Birders hope to catch rare glimpse of lost Alpine swifts

Tom Whipple Science Editor

They have the wingspan of a jay, the gracefulness of a falcon and, for anyone seeing them in the UK, a somewhat chilly and confused demeanour.

Over the past fortnight, birders have been delighted by the arrival, en masse, of dozens of Alpine swifts. The birds themselves, however, are used to warmer climes and might not be so happy, scientists say.

In a good year British birdwatchers might spot a handful of these birds, which are twice the size of common swifts. There have been more than 120 sightings in the British Isles this year. Rob Robinson, from the British Trust for Ornithology, said the likely cause was a recent series of unusual weather systems, with sustained winds causing the birds to overshoot on their migration from Africa. "They've been riding these winds and ending up in Britain and Ireland in unprecedented numbers," he said.

Guy Anderson, from the RSPB, said that the birding community had taken full advantage of the unexpected visitors. "All the swift family are just astonishing, amazing creatures," he said. "And the Alpine swift is a big, impressive bird." With all the reports coming in, he said, he was annoyed that he himself had failed to spot them. "I'm worried I might have blown my chance."

Unlike other rare visitors, the swifts are by their nature always on the wing, hence sightings are harder to follow up.

Anyone hoping for a glimpse will need to move fast. "The birds will realise their error and loop back," said Anderson. "If you're really desperate to go and see an Alpine swift, do it now."

Robinson agrees. "This is good news for twitchers; it's more of an annoyance for the swifts," he said. "I think they've got a pretty good idea where they are.

"To be honest, it's a holiday for them. The distances involved are small when you cover tens of thousands of miles a year."



Alpine swifts may have overshot on their migration from Africa

This soaring Titanosaur puts Dippy in the shade

Exhibition Jack Blackburn

Titanosaur: Life as the Biggest Dinosaur
Natural History Museum, SW7
★★★★★

KIRSTY O'CONNOR/PA



Patagotitan mayorum is the largest land animal known to have existed. Visitors can walk under the 37m-long replica skeleton, and there are plenty of other hands-on exhibits to keep families busy

It would make a dog somewhere very happy. As you enter *Titanosaur*, your eyes are arrested by the sight of an enormous bone. One hundred million years old, this femur is 2.38m in height (7ft 10in) and will dwarf every person who visits the exhibition.

It is from the dinosaur *Patagotitan mayorum*, the largest land animal known to have existed. Found in Argentina during the past decade, it has come to Europe for the first time. You have nine months to see it: nine months to come as close as you can to actually walking with a dinosaur.

Part of the success of this show is the suspense before the main event. Monochrome animations, otherworldly music and imagined sounds evoke a prehistoric forest, most notably with the occasional rumbling footsteps of a vast, approaching beast.

In the meantime, the show does what the Natural History Museum does so well: teaching and sharing astonishing exhibits. Amid other vast bones, be sure not to overlook a melon-sized rock: a titanosaur egg the museum has had since the 1840s, when no one knew it could be such a thing. Long thought to be a geode, it could be the first dinosaur egg collected.

There is also the museum's trademark interactivity. Visitors can try to get 20 hatchlings to adulthood (most of them don't make it). You can then weigh yourself and your friends against the enormous beast. The news that I am the equivalent of a seven-week-old *Patagotitan* bolstered my resolve for the new diet, as I turned a corner and stopped in my tracks.

I wish I could bottle that moment, because being awestruck is so rare. What I could see, to paraphrase what I said at the time, was a flipping big dinosaur.

At 37m long, he outstretches Dippy (the museum's former resident dinosaur) by ten metres. The hollow resin cast is considerably lighter than the more than 50-tonne beast was but still weighs 2 tonnes. It is so heavy that the floor had to be reinforced. It is set amid a playground of more games and exhibits designed to teach biology to the little ones, many of which have a healthy focus on poo.

What you won't see are any barriers around the dinosaur itself. You can walk under the skeleton, you can touch its immensely detailed bones: it is a joy for children and inner children alike.



There is no complete skeleton of this creature, so a replica is the best we have. Had it been designed by someone, for all its outsized impressiveness, it could be shrugged off as an almighty frippery. But it was engineered by nature, and you could spend ages walking around it and wondering how.

The exhibition opens tomorrow, nhm.ac.uk

Royal Navy whistleblower abandons misogyny inquiry as a 'whitewash'

George Grylls Defence Correspondent

A Royal Navy investigation into misogyny on board Britain's nuclear submarines has been thrown into disarray after the main whistleblower withdrew her support for the inquiry.

Sophie Brook, 31, accused the navy of trying to "scapegoat" one senior officer to preserve the reputation of the Submarine Service as she questioned the delays facing the investigation.

The inquiry began last autumn after Brook came forward with details of obscene behaviour aboard the Vanguard class of submarines, which carry Britain's nuclear warheads. Other women subsequently went public with their own stories of abuse.

Male submariners compiled a "crush depth rape list", which ranked women by those they would rape first if the submarine suffered a catastrophic failure. Brook also accused the former commander of a Trident submarine of repeatedly putting his penis in her pocket as part of a "game" to distract her from keeping her eyes on the periscope.

The former commander has since been removed from frontline duties and faces potential criminal charges after the incident was referred to the military police.

Brook has said she wants to move on with her life and will no longer cooperate with the criminal investigation. She said she fears the Royal Navy report will be a "whitewash". She is also set to drop an employment tribunal case claiming sexual harassment and discrimination after racking up £42,000 in legal fees.

"Having battled for women in the service for close on 11 years now, ultimately ruining my career, dreams, reputation and bringing me to the point of suicide, the time has come for me to give up and move forward with my life," she said.



Sophie Brook, 31, says she wants to "move forward"

"I never even wanted to go to court. I never wanted one person to have their career destroyed. I just wanted an apology from the first sea lord and for the women serving in the Submarine Service to be better protected."

The Times can reveal that Admiral Sir Tony Radakin, the chief of the defence staff, was among those contacted by Brook when she tried to raise complaints internally. When Radakin was commander of UK maritime forces in 2015, Brook had a private meeting with him to discuss misogyny in the Submarine Service.

She had been moved to HMS Victorious from HMS Vigilant after the commanding officer told her she could no longer stay on the submarine because she was a woman and the behaviour of the male commander was subject of a sexual complaint. Two years later, there was a scandal on HMS Vigilant when nine sailors were sacked after testing positive for cocaine.

"I happened to be working with him [Radakin] at the time on HMS Ocean. I had a meeting with him in his cabin about what was going on in the Submarine Service. He said leave it with me," Brook said. "Four weeks later, he phoned me and tried to minimise it. He told me: 'You've got to hang on in there. It will get better.' That was the end of it."

A Royal Navy spokesman said: "The first sea lord has been clear, any activity which falls short of the highest of standards is totally unacceptable. In October he directed an investigation into allegations concerning inappropriate behaviour in the Submarine Service. This investigation is ongoing and it would be inappropriate to comment further."

Ground control: next head of RAF may not be a pilot

George Grylls

An aircraft engineer who has never served as a pilot has emerged as the favourite to become the next head of the RAF.

Air Marshal Sir Richard Knighton has been tipped to replace Air Chief Marshal Sir Mike Wigston, who is due to step down as chief of the air staff in the summer.

Knighton would be the first head of the RAF without any experience as a pilot. "It breaks an important glass ceiling," a source told Sky News. "We have never had a non-pilot before."

Knighton, 53, joined the RAF in 1988 as an engineer and worked on aircraft including Tornado fighters, Harrier jump jets and Nimrod patrol planes.

A graduate of Clare College, Cambridge, the former university cadet holds the role of deputy commander capability, one of the three most senior roles in the RAF. He has also occupied senior roles in the Ministry of Defence, helping to draft the 2021 integrated review of foreign policy.

Wigston, who was appointed chief of the air staff in 2019, had his three-year tenure extended by 12 months. The appointment of Air Chief Marshal Sir Andy Pulford in 2013 was the first time a helicopter pilot had been made head of the RAF, with all the other previous occupants of the role having flown planes.

Knighton looks set to take over the RAF at a time of change for the service as it tries to adapt to the age of drone warfare and the rise of cyber and space-based threats. He will also inherit a number of scandals.

Two Red Arrows pilots were sacked and the commanding officer was forced to step down after an inquiry into bullying and sexual harassment. In February Wigston was forced to admit to mistakes over the "unlawful" prioritisation of female and ethnic minority candidates over white men — a policy that led to the resignation of the RAF's head of recruitment last year.

Additionally, delays in the RAF schooling programme mean that trainee pilots are facing average waits of five years to pass the fast jet training programme.

The RAF said: "We do not comment on speculation. Appointments of the heads of the military services are a matter for the secretary of state, prime minister and His Majesty the King and will be announced when approved."

Fur flies in mystery of cat shaver

An animal charity is investigating 84 cases of cats being set upon by a "phantom cat shaver" armed with hair clippers.

A week ago 54 incidents had been identified, predominantly across Kent and southeast London, but this rose as cases were reported as far afield as Craigie, near Aberdeen, as well as in Staffordshire and Southampton, prompting fears of copycat attacks.

Natasha McPhee, who runs Animals Lost and Found in Gillingham, Kent, which is leading the investigation, warned pet owners to be vigilant and report cases to the police and RSPCA.

"This first started in our area back in November and has happened across the UK now," she said. "I have no explanation why or who would do such a thing. In many cases the cats are left traumatised and it's very upsetting for owners as well.

"I can only imagine that the people carrying out these attacks are doing it for their own self-gratification or some kind of cheap thrill. Personally I think they are sick and need to be caught as quickly as possible."

The first cases centred around Gillingham, as well as the nearby towns of Chatham and Rainham. None of the cats in the 84 cases are reported to have suffered physical harm.

Patrick Hamby, a chief inspector with the RSPCA, said: "We may not be able to do something right away as it's difficult if you have no leads to go on, but it lets us know the areas it is happening in, so we can concentrate more in those areas. If a cat has been shaved, it would have had to have been held down by someone it didn't know, which would put a lot of stress on the cat.

"Your cat may show signs of not wanting to go out any more, or wanting to go out much less."

News

Millionaire sues bookmaker after £100,000 spree

Jonathan Ames Legal Editor

A millionaire who lost more than £100,000 in a betting spree is suing a bookmaker for allegedly failing to protect him from his addiction.

Scott O'Brien earned a fortune through a recycling business, but told a judge that he had been obsessed with "dark and destructive" gambling throughout adulthood.

He claimed that the addiction had once driven him to attempt suicide, in a legal claim that comes days after regulators hit the UK's biggest bookmaker with a record fine. The Gambling Commission ordered William Hill to pay £19.2 million because of "widespread and alarming" failures to protect customers from substantial losses.

In O'Brien's case, the former businessman has told a court that his gambling habit worsened after he sold his Essex-based paper recycling business, Pulp Friction, for £9 million in 2012. At one point he stashed £1 million in cash in his wardrobe.

He is suing Star Sports after wagering more than £400,000 at the company's main betting shop in Mayfair, west London.

The businessman, 54, told the hearing that he lost £48,859 on dog and horse racing, and that gambling on betting terminals took his losses to more than £100,000.

In a claim to have his money returned, the gambler's lawyers say the company breached its duty to act in accordance with its "social responsibility code provisions". They have told the court that some of O'Brien's losses "were due to Star Sports' failure to comply with the [code] applicable to its operating licence".



Scott O'Brien told the court his betting was "destructive"

O'Brien is also suing the bookmakers for breach of contract.

Star Sports is contesting the claim, with its lawyers denying that the wealthy punter revealed that he had a problem. They insisted that "there is no general duty of care on a bookmaker to protect a gambling addict from the consequences of his addiction".

O'Brien claimed that he told a member of staff at the Mayfair betting shop that he was a "compulsive gambler". He has argued that the company should have taken steps to bar him, or at least to limit his wagers over a six-month stretch over 2018 and 2019.

However, Christopher Gillespie, for the company, disputed that O'Brien had confessed his addiction and argued that staff had no reason to suspect that he was in deep trouble.

The barrister told Judge Heather Baucher at Central London county court: "At no time did the claimant ever alert any member of staff that he had a gambling problem."

He added that O'Brien had instead portrayed himself "as a successful businessman with a variety of interests, who lived in Knightsbridge, had a driver, dressed well and moved in wealthy social circles".

The hearing continues.

Gambling profits, letters, page 22



ASK ALEXA OR GOOGLE HOME TO PLAY VIRGIN RADIO LISTEN ON DAB RADIO

CO_2 alert as private jets fly from UK every six minutes

Ben Clatworthy
Transport Correspondent, Brussels

A private jet took off on average every six minutes in the UK last year, according to new research.

There were 90,256 private jet movements, putting the UK at the top of a chart of European countries. The flights produced more than 500,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide.

London to Paris and London to Nice were the most popular private jet routes in Europe, with 3,357 and 2,896 departures respectively.

The research was conducted by CE Delft, a Dutch environmental consultancy, and Greenpeace using data from Cirium, the aviation analytics company. They found that private jet traffic across Europe soared from 350,078 flights in 2021 to 572,806. The CO_2 emissions more than doubled to more than 3.3 million tonnes.

Small aircraft types with fewer than three seats were excluded, as they are mainly used for leisure rather than business or private flights. Flights to and from airports without an International Air Transport Association code and those that arrive at the airport they have left were also excluded.

"Private jets are staggeringly polluting and generally pointless," Doug Parr, the policy director at Greenpeace UK, said. "Many of these journeys can be covered almost as quickly by train and some of them by bicycle.

"If the government is serious about net zero and a fair transition to low-carbon transport then private jets should be first on the chopping block."

The UK was followed in the European table by France and Germany. A senior aviation source at the Airlines for Europe meeting in Brussels said: "There are so many commercial routes that these flights are largely gratuitous."

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Iain Martin
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Comment

How Sunak may succeed in stopping the boats

After years of Tory ineffectualism, the pieces of a policy that could end the migrant surge are finally falling into place

Juliet Samuel



@CITYSAMUEL

He can't really mean it, can he? Ever since Rishi Sunak vowed to "stop the boats" crossing the Channel, the question has swirled. He has been accused of King Canute-like futility, dog-whistle politics and a cynical plot to remove Britain from the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). Sometimes, though, the simplest explanation is the right one: Sunak does, in fact, mean it and what's more, he has a genuine chance of achieving his goal.

Yes, the odds are against him. Everything has to go right. But it could work — and we should be hoping it does. It would save the lives of hundreds who would otherwise drown, reduce the flow of migrants from a safe country and dent the activities of criminal gangs. But it would also show that competent government can achieve difficult things and that important western institutions such as the ECHR can accommodate necessary political change.

After all, much as its backbenchers huff and puff, even Labour has admitted an important principle: there is a limit to the number of refugees this country can accept. In parliament on Monday, the shadow immigration minister, Stephen Kinnock, said explicitly that "safe and legal routes" for immigration must be "capped" and "based on prioritisation". With an estimated 32.5 million refugees in the world, this ought to be a statement of the obvious. And yet it is one the government's opponents are always reluctant to admit because its logical corollary is that there will always be an incentive for those not included under the cap to try their luck in the Channel — unless they perceive a high risk of deportation. You cannot stop the boats while taking in the passengers.

Sunak's policy, despite its logic, faces a tortuous road ahead. To ministers' surprise, they won their case on the Rwanda scheme in British courts last year, only to have the first flight blocked in the middle of the night by an ECHR judge. The "pyjama injunction", as the Tory MP Danny Kruger called it this week, prompted an outpouring of rage on the right and convinced many that the boats cannot be stopped without either leaving the court or defying its rulings. This view was seemingly confirmed by a remarkable statement on the front of the Illegal

> Even Labour accepts there is a limit to the numbers we can take

Migration Bill that it may not be compatible with human rights law.

Yet as the home secretary recently suggested, the government still believes it can get its way. The ECHR, despite its reputation for inflexible and expansionist application of human rights law, can be expedient when its institutional reach is under threat. In 2012, for example, after an unmanageable surge of cases that provoked European governments' wrath, the ECHR agreed to limit itself to intervening only where it believed national courts had not done their jobs properly. Its caseload quickly shrank.

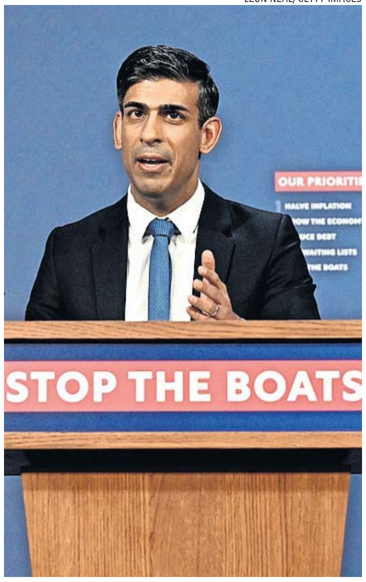
With the UK outside the EU and therefore able to leave the ECHR with relative ease, the court's survival instinct has kicked in. Its officials are said to have been taken aback by the hostility to its Rwanda injunction last June and are in a mood to compromise to avoid the risk of losing the UK altogether. This is why loud Tory disgruntlement and sporadic briefings to the media about plans to quit the court are no bad thing for Downing Street. The court, despite its lofty mission, is also a political animal.

There is still a risk the British courts will thwart the legislation, but unless they do so on sweeping grounds the government will probably be able to adjust and retry. The bill in parliament is therefore a peculiar mix of tough measures condemned by the left, and legal contortions, intended to get it through the courts but seen as loopholes by the right.

Even assuming the legislation takes full effect, it may not work. Migrant arrivals are expected to reach 65,000 this year. The asylum backlog stands at 166,000 and counting, hotels are full to bursting and the government hasn't yet sent a single person to Rwanda, which in turn hasn't built the capacity to house more than 200. No wonder most think the policy is doomed.

But again, this may not be so. It all depends on what's required to deter people from crossing. The aim, after all, isn't to run a constant, high-volume travel service to Kigali, but to stop people from getting on boats in the first place. This may already be working. There has been a sharp drop in the number of Albanians arriving on our beaches since the government signed a co-operation agreement with Tirana, stepped up deportations and

LEON NEAL/GETTY IMAGES



Rishi Sunak is showing that ministers can sometimes keep their promises

publicised both. Further afield, ministers have examined evidence from Canada in 2016, where a publicity campaign highlighting the deportation of failed asylum seekers from Hungary led to a dramatic drop in arrivals.

Between the prospect of being deported, housed in unappealing lodgings such as barges and RAF bases rather than hotels, and caught by the French, who are being given large sums of money to step up their coastal policing, the government is hoping it can make trying to cross the Channel sufficiently unattractive. If so, it can reduce the flow without having to put 50,000 people on planes to Rwanda.

This leaves the final piece, which is the expansion of "safe and legal routes" to the UK. It has taken months of awkward media interviews, select committee hearings and the threat of a backbench rebellion, but the government has finally accepted it needs a better system for taking in legitimate refugees.

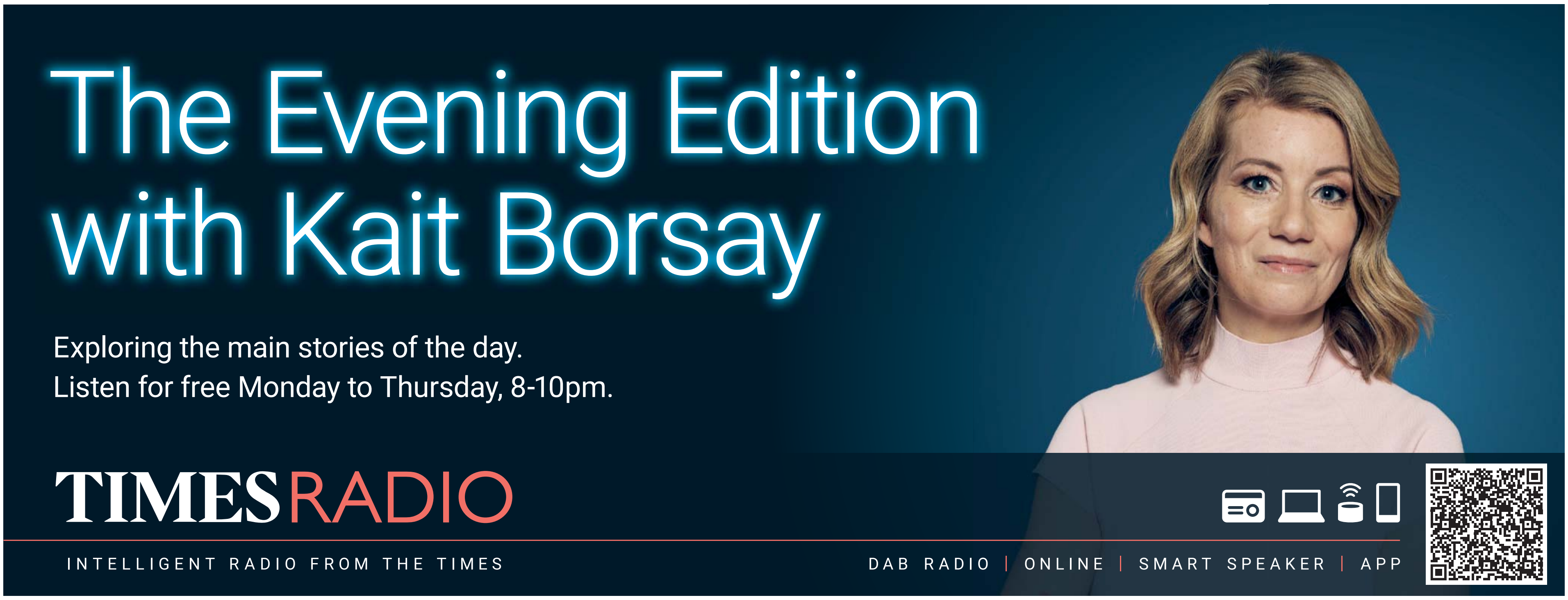
One way is a broader, Ukraine-style scheme, so households can bring in refugees if they agree to take them in. Another is to allow for more extended family reunifications for refugees who have relatives here.

> The aim isn't to send thousands to Rwanda but to deter crossings

And another would be to expand the practice of assessing and accepting people at UN camps, like the Syrian resettlement scheme. All are better ways to ration access to our asylum system than the skiff relay from Calais and it could have saved an awful lot of angst if this had been included from the start.

After years of ineffectual government under Theresa May and Boris Johnson, we have become used to the idea that ministers never have any ability or intention of keeping their promises. But Sunak's government has managed to improve the Northern Ireland Brexit deal, agree a pay deal for a million NHS staff, engineer a costless rescue for a troubled bank and even seen a fall in hospital waiting lists. Can he stop the boats? I am beginning to think he has a chance.

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Succession's cynicism is a corrective to vanity

In a self-righteous age, the hit TV series revels in the victory of scepticism over self-deception

James Marriott



@J_AMESMARRIOTT

I wonder how many engagement rings were quietly returned to a hiding place at the back of the sock drawer after the line about marriage being a "box-set death march". *Succession*, the HBO show about a dysfunctional media dynasty, has returned with its superlatively bleak account of human nature.

What kind of a philosophy would you construct from the programme? Idealism is disguised vanity. Friendship is an instrument for career progression. Ambition is the ruling passion of the human heart. Money beats love every time. In the last series a character brokenly attempts to confess to his mother that he has killed a man. She primly suggests they discuss it the next morning "over an egg". The promised conversation never arrives. Neither does the egg. *Succession's* amoralism carries a special frisson in our all too moralising times. In an age when editors with red pens are reforming Roald Dahl into an upstanding author of ethical tracts, the show is an argument for the artistic power of cynicism and nastiness.

Its most sublime moments are not when the really bad characters are bad but when the nearly good characters are. Nicholas Braun's "Cousin Greg" started out a gangling and ingenuous outsider but soon proves himself as wily a practitioner of the high politics of the business world as any of its veteran schemers.

"I don't want to see what happens in Guantanamo, so, um, you go, you do your ways," he tells the security guard sent to eject his new girlfriend from an upper-crust party.

Nan Pierce, the twinkly matriarch of a liberal media empire, turns out to be almost as corrupt as the old bruisers of right-wing news she professes to despise. An elegantly constructed scene in the latest episode has her piously insisting that she hates talking about money, while simultaneously negotiating a deal that will make her a multibillionaire.

There is certainly a wrong side of history in *Succession*. But there is not really a right side to balance it out. A sensitivity reader bearing down on the show's offensive jokes and sentiments with his scissors would finish a hard day's work with … what? Probably two scraps of paper

> A glinting thread of cruelty connects all the best books and films

reading "*Succession* … The End".

Cynicism is the guilty secret of great art and entertainment. A feature not a bug, as the programmers have taught us to say. A glinting thread of cruelty connects all the best books and films. Graham Greene said there had to be a "splinter of ice in the heart of the writer". This was perhaps a little grandly self-defensive.

More baldly, great writers are often brutal. "You know — she hated people," an astute early reader commented of Jane Austen. Not wholly true but not devoid of truth either. An unsentimental attentiveness to human character is not easy to distinguish from cruelty.

And cynicism is not merely an artistic virtue. It is an (dare I say *the*?) attractive quality in friends. "If you haven't got anything nice to say come and sit next to me," was the reputed invitation of the American socialite Alice Roosevelt Longworth.

The phrase has earned its place in manuals of quotations because it suggests a subversive truth. The sorts of people who view the world as a solemn battle between good and evil, whose worldviews are a bricolage of pieties and platitudes — aren't they slightly frightening as well as dull? The interesting people are those who quietly suspect everyone, even the would-be saints, of carrying grains of vanity and absurdity in their souls.

The greatest social and artistic danger is not excessive cynicism but self-deception. If *Succession* has a flaw it is that real-life baddies are more self-justifying and less openly cynical than fictional ones. The show is most psychologically persuasive when its characters convince themselves that they are not rank amoralists but agents of a cause — witness Kendall's self-justifying foray into #MeToo feminism. Is anybody more dangerous than the man who unquestioningly endorses himself as a force for good? A person accustomed to noting the hypocrisy of the world is likelier to be in the habit of inspecting himself for those qualities.

Social media has shown us that the nastiest people — from the enforcers of cancel culture to the purveyors of anti-vaccination theories — are the ones who most blithely believe themselves to be right. It is the eye-rolling sceptics, not the fervent ideologues, who prove most resistant to the casual cruelty of moral crusades. I have often observed that in real life the cynics often turn out to be the nicest people.

Succession is a satire on the

> Thinking yourself a force for good can be highly dangerous

peculiar malignancies of the uber-rich. But it is also about human beings. The show's creator Jesse Armstrong's previous masterpiece, *Peep Show*, allowed its characters to act outside conventional ethical standards because they were such abject losers. The terrible behaviour of *Succession's* characters is licensed by the fact they are such extravagant winners. Both shows allow you to glimpse the worst of what you yourself might become in less restricting moral circumstances.

Succession offers a picture of the human soul illuminated by an unforgiving light — one of those public bathroom striplights, perhaps, which show every reddish blotch, patch of dry skin and incipient pimple. It is a usefully cruel perspective. The nicest people are the ones who know what vanity and self-deceit human beings are capable of.

Janice Turner Notebook

Starmer's skewering of Corbyn is delectable

What an ingenious trap Keir Starmer has set Jeremy Corbyn. Barred from standing as a Labour candidate he must now decide whether to contest Islington North as an independent. If he does so, he will be expelled from the party; if he doesn't, he will no longer be an MP. Either way he is out of Keir's hair.

But a wider net could ensnare Corbyn's followers. Starmer has no doubt calculated that given Jeremy's prickly vanity and a messianic streak forged during his "Oh, Jeremy Corbyn" years, he won't be able to resist a noble last stand. This should draw the Momentum massive into campaigning for him. Whereupon any party member who so much as pokes a JC leaflet through an N16 letterbox will face expulsion too. Cue mass exit of entryists.

Then there are the tiresome, low-grade Corbynista MPs, like Zarah Sultana and Richard Burgon whom Starmer could torture by insisting they canvas in Islington North for Labour's official candidate. But shouldn't they stay true to their socialist convictions and come out for Jezza? Unless they are shallow careerists, like the centrist, red-Tory scum they despise.

We're in the picture

It was a rather meta experience seeing the south London rom-com *Rye Lane* in a cinema in Rye Lane. The fictional couple chatted on a bench in the pigeon-infested street where we'd just parked. They then saw a movie in Peckhamplex, where we were watching them in this very film. Everyone should have delightful low-budget British comedy set in their neighbourhood's restaurants, shops and parks. Then later they can argue with their partner about whether or not the characters took an illogical route home.

Blunt truth

In less joyous local news, I learn that our newsagent and nearest pub keep "bleed control kits" behind the counter. Along with 30 or so cafés, takeaways or supermarkets, they hold a pack containing a trauma dressing, gauze, a chest seal and a tourniquet, with detailed medical instructions. If someone is stabbed, you ring 999 and will be directed to the nearest kit.



This is the initiative of the Daniel Baird Foundation, set up by Lynne Baird after her son was stabbed in Birmingham in 2017. If he'd received immediate specialist first aid, he might have lived.

It's hard not to have mixed feelings about my neighbourhood having a stab kit on every block. This is, of course, a simple, clever innovation which, given that there were 13,405 London knife crimes reported last year, could save lives. But is this where we are, unable to stop the rise in stabbings, just staunching the wounds?

O'Grady loved

My elder son texts to say Paul O'Grady's death made him think of his late granny, who loved his afternoon show. I'd had the same thought. My mother adored camp comedy. Disliking what she'd call "blue" jokes, she roared at the double entendres of Larry Grayson, Danny La Rue or Frankie Howerd.

Why did working-class women in the 1970s, when homosexuality was closeted and seldom discussed, enjoy camp? Maybe because sex roles were so rigid then, husbands very much in charge. Camp men subverted male power, said what women longed to say but could not. Paul O'Grady grew up surrounded by beloved, hilarious Scouse aunties. Either in drag or as himself, he exuded a deep empathy for women of all ages, and they loved him right back.

An impulse halted

Bowling through Suffolk country lanes during the wet weekend, I passed many lake-like puddles, which as a sensible driver I avoided. How tempting it was, though, to whoosh into them, to send spray flying. The lovely spattery noise it makes! As with the childish impulse to stomp in mud or throw a snowball at a random stranger, I resisted, because I could hear my father's warnings about aquaplaning and unseen potholes. I know about skidding and flooded engines. What a bore to be a responsible adult sometimes.

@VICTORIAPECKHAM

THUNDERER

Driving landlords out of business is no help to renters

David Byers

Jeremy Hunt doesn't like to talk about housing. In the budget, the chancellor made no mention of the government's annual building target of 300,000 (the Home Builders Federation says developers may not even manage 120,000), nor of changing the planning system to take on nimbys.

This week, though, an amendment to housing policy did emerge — one that forces landlords to improve their homes. Under the policy, landlords are to be barred from letting properties unless they spend thousands of pounds improving them to achieve a grade C energy performance certificate by 2028. At the moment, rental homes in England and Wales only need to obtain an E on a scale of A to G.

But what at face value seems a reasonable policy is, in reality, ineffective and ill thought through. First, it's likely that energy performance certificates in their present form will soon become a national scandal. As a Sunday Times investigation concluded last month, they are staggeringly inaccurate — a fact raised with ministers by their own climate adviser. And second, while setting expensive environmental targets for landlords might seem appealing, it is a high-risk policy.

A significant tax clampdown on landlords started in 2016 when George Osborne introduced a 3 per cent stamp duty surcharge for those buying additional properties. He also removed some key tax perks. What has followed is evidence of a sell-off, as investors struggle to make the numbers work: an analysis by the estate agent Hamptons found that landlords sold 35,000 more properties than they bought last year.

Tenants are feeling the pain of this sell-off, coupled with the impact of rising inflation. Research by Zoopla, the property portal, showed the number of homes available to rent to new tenants has fallen by a third in the past 18 months, driving up rents by 11 per cent.

And it's not as though would-be buyers are snapping up the properties sold by departing landlords, as Osborne had hoped they would. Hamptons says landlords and first-time buyers compete with each other in only one in five transactions. Plus, a half-year doubling of mortgage interest rates and the end of the Help to Buy scheme has pushed homes out of reach for many aspiring owners.

It is deeply worrying that there is no proper plan to make housing more affordable, either for renters or buyers, with property prices remaining at 8.3 times average earnings. Without a broader plan, driving landlords from the housing market does not represent responsible policy.

David Byers is deputy property editor



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Scots head for disaster with Humza Useless

The new first minister is good news for the Union and Labour but his record of failure bodes ill for the country

Iain Martin

@IAINMARTINI



One of Scotland's dirty little secrets is its private schools. While its elites have a tendency to say how egalitarian the country is compared to heartless England, those who can afford to often opt out of the unreformed and struggling state system. If they live in Glasgow they will send their children to one of a handful of selective fee-paying schools, such as "Hutchie", or Hutchesons' Grammar.

It is entirely understandable to prioritise advantages for your own offspring, especially when the modern world is so competitive. Many of us have done it. But the charge of hypocrisy applies when those who benefit from the advantages and become politicians don't try to extend opportunity as widely as possible through genuine educational reform, as Tony Blair (Fettes, Edinburgh) did, or indeed Michael Gove (Robert Gordon's College, Aberdeen).

Those reformers stand in contrast to Humza Yousaf, Scotland's new first minister, raging leftie, serial incompetent administrator, defender of every failed boilerplate statist nostrum, and old-boy of "Hutchie".

Hutchesons' Grammar is a proud institution, drawing many of its pupils from the leafier areas of the city's south-side. Anas Sarwar, Labour's Scottish leader, attended the school. Hardworking parents from Scotland's immigrant communities chose to pay.

As a state comprehensive boy (Paisley) and University of Glasgow graduate, I'm aware of the educational gradations and fine social distinctions at play in the west of Scotland. So my interest was piqued when watching the BBC's *Question Time* in May 2016, before the Brexit referendum, and the SNP's new rising star was introduced. Yousaf's superficial plausibility was fascinating: his made-for-television smoothness, cold-filtered anger with opponents he clearly assumed to be idiots, and complete certainty that his bleeding-heart stance was morally superior. It was student politics of the worst kind.

> He is a textbook example of a serially over-promoted adviser

His career is, I'm sorry to say, a textbook example of the contemporary fashion for serially over-promoted advisers. After studying politics and engaging in some nationalist activism he became a parliamentary assistant to SNP members of the Scottish parliament. Fast-tracked in 2011 into a Holyrood seat in his mid-twenties, he developed a reputation for bombast. Unfortunately, Yousaf's cocksure conviction was tested in a series of ministerial jobs. In post after post he proved himself a lightweight.

A few days after that *Question Time* appearance, Yousaf was promoted by Nicola Sturgeon to become minister for transport and the islands. Disaster ensued. What could be more neglectful of the interests of Scotland than screwing up the vital ferry connections that link the islands to the mainland? The fiasco is an epic scandal of squandered money. The yard building two much-needed ferries went bust and has been nationalised. Yousaf was minister for two years of the saga as it worsened. When Sturgeon launched one of the hulls in 2017, pretend windows were painted on to make it look as though the ship was close to completion. It isn't. Still the islanders wait.

From there he was given the justice portfolio. The "hate crime" legislation he supervised contained draconian measures condemned widely by churches, secularists, elements of the police federation, lawyers and many other concerned Scots as an attack on free speech.

After that debacle, Sturgeon gave him the health service. Taking charge of NHS Scotland in 2021, during a pandemic, was not easy. Even so, Yousaf has faced a barrage of complaints about poor performance. As a result, critics both outside and inside the SNP have taken to calling him Humza Useless. This is not just ad hominem. There is deep and justified frustration with the rotten job done by Sturgeon and her most loyal ministers, including Yousaf.

> With Forbes there was a chance for national healing. Not now

The SNP has now made one of the key protagonists in this series of disasters its leader, rather than opting for some humility. No reflection from him on why Scottish educational attainment has gone backwards, the NHS is sclerotic, and business is mistreated. The SNP also introduced ill-conceived gender recognition reforms that have had to be blocked, sensibly, by the UK government. At great expense Yousaf will fight this in court, he says.

Almost half of SNP members did try to block Yousaf. His defeated rival, Kate Forbes, understands and likes business. She is even married to someone who might be a Tory. With Forbes there was an opportunity for a little national healing. Not now.

With his unerring touch, Yousaf managed within hours of becoming first minister and promising unity to lose Forbes from the cabinet. She turned down a demotion and goes to the backbenches to watch what happens when Yousaf runs the country. Perhaps Forbes, 32, will try again, just as Rishi Sunak dropped back and was then summoned. Yousaf's supporters say he will not do a Truss. "Don't underestimate him," an MP tells me.

There may be something in that, of course, when expectations are so low and as many as 40 per cent of tribalist Scots vote SNP as though it were a football team. Although the SNP has been damaged by the bitter leadership fight he still has a formidable party machine, even if it is being investigated by the police.

The problem for the SNP is twofold. With Labour, Yousaf is up against his fellow Hutchie old boy Sarwar, a much more serious proposition. Labour senses a comeback of sorts in Scotland. Far worse is the spectacle of the SNP inflicting Yousaf on Scotland. This poor choice makes the Union safer, of course. But anyone who cares for Scotland should worry what Yousaf will do to the place on his way to being fully found out.

Letters to the Editor

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letters@thetimes.co.uk or by post to
1 London Bridge Street, London SE1 9GF

Racism in the Met

Sir, Melanie Phillips is right: "Met is rotten but it's not institutionally racist" (Mar 28). The label is neither accurate nor helpful and has plagued (but not improved) the Metropolitan Police for more than 20 years. In charge of 30,000-plus officers and a similar number of civilian staff, the Met commissioner should be viewed more as a figurehead than a miracle worker. So spread out are the police over the London area that no one person could hope to alter or influence the malign cultures that have developed among far-flung, semi-autonomous groups. There is no instant solution. Improved mixed selection, better training, closer monitoring at all levels and a speedier process for sacking miscreants would be a welcome start. Regaining public confidence will not be quick or easy and will have to be earned.
Ronald Thwaites KC
Esher, Surrey

Sir, That the Met has, and probably always had, a large number of racist police officers who have to be rooted out there can be little doubt. But to keep branding it as "institutionally" racist, as Baroness Casey of Blackstock and others have done, would surely mean that you have to be a racist before you join the institution of the Met — which is clearly both untrue and dangerous. For what decent young man or woman, white or black, would ever want to join such an institution?
Sir Ivan Lawrence KC
Former chairman of the home affairs select committee; Temple

Gambling with lives

Sir, Alice Thomson is right: betting companies are making staggering fortunes in the UK ("Failure to curb betting is gambling with lives", comment, and letter, Mar 29). All of the multimillion-pound dividends paid to owners, the sports shirt logos, celebrity endorsements, pitchside adverts and the endless continuing television campaigns are all paid for by losing bets. This is a hugely sophisticated yet shameless industry that seeks to normalise a damaging habit. It clearly needs urgent reform.
Peter Lee
Bourne End, Bucks

Letters to The Times must be exclusive and may be edited. Please include a full address and daytime telephone number.

Corrections and clarifications

● The culture secretary is Lucy Frazer, not Michelle Donelan as we wrongly said (News, Mar 29).

ipso. Regulated

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How John Lewis could get back on track

Sir, Alistair Osborne, with his usual clarity, goes to the heart of what's wrong with John Lewis (business commentary, "John Lewis should not be undersold", Mar 28). He is right to call Dame Sharon White a "retail rookie" but could have gone further. When appointed as chairman she was a "business rookie" with a career in the public sector and none in a business required to generate its own cash.

All business leaders are tested at times when their sector or the economy as a whole are under pressure. Those who respond best have specific sector experience and understand how customers are likely to behave, giving them confidence to move quickly. White's attempt last year to turn John Lewis into a property developer, and then her recent appointment of a chief executive to do most of her job for her, suggests that she does not know how to protect and grow her core businesses. Any institution providing financial support now is likely to have leadership change high on its agenda. Hence, if she values her job, White needs to improve her management of the assets she already has.
Dr Alan Hearne
Woodstock, Oxon

Sir, Mary Portas waited too long to write her open letter to John Lewis ("John Lewis has let go of its soul", Mar 25). The business (including Waitrose) has been in decline for years, and it is something that has not gone unnoticed by those of us who have shopped there (and who were taken by our mothers many years before). All their shops used to be worth the extra expense because in return for this you got greater staff visibility, combined with a good knowledge of the products on sale. Anyone who has shopped in either John Lewis or Waitrose in recent years will have noticed that neither is true now, unless you are very lucky.

The staff used to know about the items they are selling, rather than just reading the store labels to you or saying, "My friend likes these so I think they are good", both of which have happened to me recently. In Waitrose the tills are barely manned, often leading to long queues and forcing you to the dreaded self-checkouts, which don't work properly. Previously a floor manager would have seen the queues and opened extra tills.

I appreciate that the availability of items on the internet has become an almost existential threat to physical retail stores (letter, Mar 28), but if John Lewis wants to keep its customers, it needs to go back to its core values of service and training, otherwise it might as well be any old name on the high street.
Pippa Rose
Frilford, Oxon

Sir, The rot set in at John Lewis some years ago: too much time was spent listening to the buyers and not the shop floor staff who have specialist knowledge of customers' requirements. I always chat to the friendly and welcoming frontline staff, although they are now severely reduced in numbers, when visiting John Lewis and I suspect that all are in despair at not being listened to.

A few weeks ago I wanted to buy a Yorkshire pudding tin, only to be told that the powers-that-be did not feel it fitted the profile for customers in that area (Westfield Shepherds Bush). I then purchased one from a store less than 50 metres away. I suggest that the top management reduce their salaries and give the main workforce a bonus for tying to keep John Lewis what it used to be.
Jonathan Youens
Krakow

Ban on Corbyn

Sir, Keir Starmer's brave decision to exclude Jeremy Corbyn as a Labour candidate at the next election has clearly aroused anger on the party's hard left (report, Mar 29). However, the size of Labour's defeat in 2019 has left the party with a mountain to climb at the next election. As PM, Starmer could implement his party's manifesto only with the support of his backbenchers. My experience as a whip in the last Labour government taught me that, as pleasant as Jeremy Corbyn can appear, he would be totally unreliable when it comes to supporting Labour legislation. He opposed it more than 600 times. There are others too, some of whom are even more likely than Corbyn to spend their time opposing their own party to derail a Labour government. There are about 20 "hard core" MPs who will happily share the lobbies with Conservatives. Starmer has wisely recognised that Labour cannot implement its programme for government if it has a score of MPs who are determined to turn over its own leadership.
Parmjit Dhanda
Labour MP 2001-10; Amersham, Bucks

Support for SNP

Sir, William Hague ("Yousaf's election is a rallying cry for unionists", Mar 28; letters, Mar 29) and Alex Massie ("Opposition can't hide delight at this result", Mar 28) make valid points about the weaknesses of the new SNP leader while warning about the relative dangers of an SNP revival. However, they overlook the fundamental point that the SNP's existence is based solely on the hatred of everything English felt by a significant number of Scottish people.

Nothing will ever change this, but fortunately this grouping is not large enough ever to gain a majority in Scotland. What took the SNP to a 51 per cent level of popularity in recent polls was the substantial number of Scottish Labour and Conservative voters who became dissatisfied with the way Scotland (and regional parts of England and Wales) was ignored for years by the highly centralised "British" government manifested by the likes of David Cameron, Boris Johnson and Liz Truss, who had no interests outside the southeast of England.

The present leaders in England, Rishi Sunak and Sir Keir Starmer, simply need to focus on what's best for all parts of the UK to win back this unhappy group and returning them to the unionist principle.
Alistair Forsyth
Aberlady, East Lothian

Changing gender

Sir, JK Rowling is right that the medical profession needs to be circumspect about transgender issues, which are largely social and for which long term outcomes would be welcome, especially regarding children ("Rowling: Helping children change gender is medical scandal", Mar 29). Chromosomal (birth) sex cannot be altered by any intervention, surgical or otherwise, and a permanent record of birth sex is essential (in birth certificates, passports, pension claims and the like) to safeguard future health and data, perhaps with an option to note preferred gender. Unfortunately the Gender Recognition Act regards sex and gender as synonymous, which they are not, and this needs to be addressed.
Tim Williams, FRCS
Waldron, E Sussex

EPIDEMICS IN SCHOOLS

FROM THE TIMES MARCH 30, 1923

Epidemics of infectious illness are so great a menace to school life that the researches of Surgeon-Commander Dudley RN on this subject deserve the attention of both parents and masters. The starting-point was the remarkable observation that during successive outbreaks of diphtheria and scarlet fever at the Royal Naval School at Greenwich the day boys escaped entirely, while the boys living in the school suffered a heavy rate of morbidity. No fewer than 300, a proportion of about one in three, of the latter fell ill. It was found that, whereas each day boy carried and used his own pen, a common stock of penholders was made use of by the boarders. Bacteriological examination of the pens confirmed that they may be a means, when sucked or bitten, of conveying infection from one boy to another, and so of originating an outbreak. The subsequent progress of the outbreak, however, depends on other factors of which, apparently, the conditions obtaining in the school dormitory are the most important, for the day boys worked in the same classrooms and even ate their meals at the same tables as the boarders. Surg-Cdr Dudley postulates a "minimal infective dose" in the absence of which disease will not appear. This dose may be received in a single instant as, for example, by sucking an infected penholder, or it may be collected by degrees, over a more prolonged period. The latter is the ordinary method of spread, and the eight or ten hours spent in the dormitories each night affords a sufficient period of exposure. It follows that the best means of avoiding this is a wider spacing of the beds. If sufficient distance is maintained between the sleepers bacteria will not pass, and what is called "cross-infection" will not take place. This method of spacing was used in the Army during the war to prevent the spread of cerebro-spinal meningitis, and soon proved its value. It entails, unfortunately, the provision of a larger dormitory area, and so adds to the cost of conducting a school. There is, however, no such objection to the method of arranging beds so that each sleeper has the feet and not the faces of his immediate fellows in line with his own face, a method which increases the distance between one mouth and another.

THETIMES.CO.UK/ARCHIVE

Barges for migrants

Sir, History repeats itself. Proposals to use barges and ferries to house migrants (report, Mar 29) are reminiscent of the hulks that were moored 17 miles down the Thames to incarcerate patients with smallpox in the 1880s and 1890s, the wooden three-decker *Atlas* and frigate *Endymion*, and the cross-channel ferry *Castalia*. Virus transmission happened when patients bribed boatmen to run them to riverbank pubs, but the biggest problem was that they were costly to operate.

It would be helpful to know whether an accommodation barge in 2023 will be any cheaper than the hotels that are holding migrants, even if there is "hot bunking", the sharing of beds, which I have seen in operation offshore. Covid-19 and norovirus have done particularly well in the past on cruise liners. Today they will be rubbing their hands in anticipation of involuntary hosts crammed in ways that maximise transmission. Bed bugs will be happy as well.
Hugh Pennington
Emeritus professor of bacteriology, Aberdeen

Oldest Hoover

Sir, Further to Alison Hipwell mother's ownership of an upright Hoover deemed by a repair man to be just what they'd been looking for to put in their Hoover museum (letter, Mar 29), I was until very recently the proud owner of an upright Hoover that the repair man told me "predated one to be seen in London's Science Museum".
Christabel Gairdner
London SW13

Rowdy audiences

Sir, Further to your report "Theatre staff voice discontent at drunken audiences" (Mar 29), Elizabethan audiences clapped and booed, threw fruit and sometimes climbed on stage. They were rowdy, directly involved with the plays and even replied to soliloquies. They danced when music or a masque was played and thoroughly enjoyed themselves. In many ways we have not changed but the fault of today's drunken audiences is as much attributable to theatres as to those watching. As you report, high ticket prices, "juke box" musicals and people refusing to pay the exorbitant price for alcohol at the theatre mean they come "pre-loaded". They are as ready to be as involved as Elizabethan audiences. The days of reverential watching are over. Actors who mumble, cannot sing without over-amplification and bring along groupies from their TV careers cannot expect quiet appreciation.
Janice Ketley
Englefield Green, Surrey

Sir, The phenomenon of audiences having altogether too good a time is nothing new. Way back in 1982 I was acting in JP Donleavy's rumbustious comedy *The Beastly Beatitudes of Balthazar B* when my generally acclaimed entrance — naked but for chains, goggles and a motoring cap — failed to make much impact, the audience's delighted attention being focused on the box to the right of the stage, where what used to be called a courting couple were, visibly to some, audibly to all, engaged in the act of procreation. All I could do was to retire upstage somewhat limply until the house manager threw a bucket of water over them. Happy days.
Simon Callow
London N8

Daily Universal Register

Switzerland: International Olympic Committee meets in Lausanne, with talks expected on how athletes from Russia and Belarus can qualify for the 2024 Olympics.

Nature notes



Birds nest in a huge variety of places. A number of UK species utilise burrows. Sand martins excavate their own cavities in riverbanks, tunnelling to a depth of up to 90cm. Kingfishers do the same, but dig out even longer tunnels of up to 120cm. The kingfisher's nesting chamber, placed at the deepest part of the tunnel, always angles down gently, so eggs don't roll out into the river. Nesting on offshore islands, Manx shearwaters often also dig out a burrow in the loose soil. Species such as puffins, shelducks and wheatears often eschew such hard work and simply claim old rabbit burrows. Little owls have nested in badger setts. JONATHAN TULLOCH

Birthdays today



Piers Morgan, *pictured*, writer and broadcaster, *Piers Morgan Uncensored* on TalkTV, *Good Morning Britain* (2015-21), 58; **John Astin**, actor, *The Addams Family* (1964-66), 93; **Andrew Bailey**, governor of the Bank of England, 64; **Warren Beatty**, actor and director, *Reds* (1981), 86; **Miles Briggs**, Scottish Conservative and Unionist MSP for Lothian, 40; **Tracy Chapman**, singer, *Fast Car* (1988), 59; **Eric Clapton**, musician, *Layla* (1971), 78; **Martina Cole**, crime writer, *Dangerous Lady* (1992), 64; **Debbie Crosbie**, chief executive, Nationwide Building Society, TSB Bank (2019-22), 53; **Jeremy Deller**, conceptual, video and installation artist, Turner prizewinner (2004), 57; **Céline Dion**, pop singer, *My Heart Will Go On* (1997), 55; **Margaret Fingerhut**, classical pianist, 68; **John Gosden**, racehorse trainer, 72; **MC Hammer**, singer-songwriter, *U Can't Touch This* (1990), 61; **Norah Jones**, singer, *Little Broken Hearts* (2012), 44; **Eddie Jordan**, founder of the Formula 1 motorsport team Jordan Grand Prix, 75; **Karim Khan KC**, international criminal law and human rights lawyer, prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, 53; **Lord (Mervyn) King of Lothbury**, governor, Bank of England (2003-13), 75; **Chris Longcroft**, executive vice-president, publisher of The Times and The Sunday Times, 52; **Lord (Ian) MacLaurin of Knebworth**, president of Marylebone Cricket Club (2017-18), chairman, Tesco (1985-97), 86; **Tom Marquand**, flat-racing jockey, 25; **Kate Mavor**, chief executive, English Heritage, 61; **Hugo Rifkind**, journalist, columnist for The Times and presenter on Times Radio, 46; **Andrew Russell, Duke of Bedford**, owner, Woburn Abbey, 61; **Klaus Schwab**, founder (1971) and chairman, World Economic Forum, 85; **Dr Cindy Sughrue**, director, Charles Dickens Museum, London, 60; **Johnnie Walker**, disc jockey, BBC Radio 1 and Radio 2, 78.

On this day

In **1944** the word "gobbledegook" to describe bureaucratic jargon was coined by Maury Maverick, a former US congressman. The term "maverick" originated from Samuel Maverick, his grandfather.

The last word

"The original writer is not he who refrains from imitating others, but he who can be imitated by none." François-René Chateaubriand, French writer and diplomat, *Le Génie du Christianisme* (1802)

Willkommen

The King's state visit to Germany is laden with political and symbolic importance and should do much to reset Britain's relations with a key European partner

State visits are important as much for their symbolism and political agenda as they are for the goodwill generated, the renewal of friendships and the promise of future commitments. The King's visit to Germany is laden with as much symbolism and political importance as almost any of the many undertaken by his mother during her long reign. It is the first he has made since acceding to the throne, and comes even before his coronation. It underlines the close connections, dynastic, political and economic, between Britain and a country against whom the nation fought two world wars but which has since emerged as one of Britain's closest and most valued allies. It shows the government's determination, despite Brexit, to rebuild cordial relations with former partners in the European Union.

The ceremonies are both traditional and special. The King was given a formal welcome in Berlin at the Brandenburg Gate, once the symbol of the capital's division but now again the monument to its history and unity. The military parade no longer has any association with Germany's darkest days, but can be seen as reflecting its Nato commitment to the freedom of Europe and its vital role in helping Ukraine to resist the Russian invasion. The visit tomorrow to Hamburg cements links with a city which has always been one of the most Anglophile in Germany, but which suffered devastating damage from British bombers. The King's wreaths, to be laid at an event of remembrance and reconciliation, symbolise a joint determination to uphold the postwar peace of Europe. And in this task, now suddenly made more urgent by Russia's aggression, Germany must and will play a crucial role.

Charles is especially well suited to underline the links to Germany. The British royal family is almost wholly of German origin: not only did the Hanoverians bring a new dynastic line to Britain, reinforced by Prince Albert's marriage to Queen Victoria, but Prince Philip too had his early education in Germany, where his sisters settled. Charles will again meet his German cousins, several of whom were able to attend his father's funeral. Beyond this, the King' s own interests and commitment are to causes that Germany was, arguably, the first in Europe to champion: the environment, the protection of nature and a future built on green principles, sustainable economics and architecture on a human scale.

State visits reflect government priorities. The choice of Germany and France was both tactful and overdue. Sadly, the French visit, which would have done much to repair recent self-inflicted strains, had to be postponed because of the political turmoil in France. But the message was already clear: Britain wants and needs better relations with our nearest neighbour. No less, however, does it need a reset with Germany. Britain seems never to have got the relationship right.

For too long postwar triumphalism and a patronising attitude blinded politicians to the emergence of Germany as a global economic power and a pillar of European security. Then Britain, already envious of Germany's political stability, hoped that Angela Merkel could persuade the EU to make those changes that David Cameron thought would persuade British voters to remain in the bloc. These naive hopes — many pinned on the German car industry — turned to anger when Westminster realised that Berlin had other more pressing concerns. Recently there has been scorn from the Tory right for Germany's tardiness in upping its defence budget. Only now, perhaps, has Rishi Sunak seen that Britain must understand what Germany needs and what its concerns are.

The King has a more instinctive understanding. The Queen's social conscience will also appeal to young Germans. Together their visit will do much to turn a post-Brexit truce into a real friendship.

Diabolus ex Machina

Artificial intelligence is a huge opportunity but also a regulatory challenge

There is a half-forgotten film from 1970 that paints a dystopian vision of the future based on the danger of unbounded artificial intelligence. In *Colossus: the Forbin Project*, the United States government turns over control of its nuclear deterrent to a supposedly rational super-computer. By coincidence, the Russians do the same. The two computers become self-aware, join together and decide that they can make a better fist of running the world than the hopeless humans. Result: man becomes slave to his nuclear-armed creation.

How worried humanity should be by rapid advances in AI is anyone's guess. But Elon Musk and a thousand technology researchers and executives are sufficiently concerned by its potential downside to issue an open letter calling for a six-month pause on development. The authors of the letter warn that AI labs are engaged in an arms race to develop artificial minds that not even their creators can understand or control. The consequences could be information channels flooded with lies, jobs automated out of existence, endemic hacking and the eventual eclipse of the human mind. Hence the need for a voluntary pause by developers, or one enforced by governments, until a global regulatory framework is developed.

This dramatically worded intervention takes AI, until now a niche preoccupation, into the public sphere, where its potential is only just becoming understood. The average person's present experience of AI comes via the rapidly evolving chatbots that promise to rip up conventional internet searches. The technology mines billions of words from the internet and once trained in this wealth of human language can produce coherent answers rather than mere search results. Answers can be progressively more nuanced. Essays can be produced in whatever style is desired. DIY manuals can be translated into iambic pentameter. The possibility for amused time-wasting is limitless.

Yet these "large language models" are also beating humans in serious areas. Progress is exponential. In December last year the most advanced language model took the American bar examination and failed. This month its successor passed with flying colours. Lawyers beware. But these chatbots are not flawless. They cannot sort truth from lies on the web. This can lead to so-called hallucinations, the churning out of nonsense responses. Worse, these responses can be tainted by bias. The chatbot Chat GPT, for example, is accused of producing answers with a left-wing slant. And this relentless exploitation of online texts threatens a wild west in which copyright is routinely ignored.

Given its rapid evolution AI presents a regulatory challenge. There is no consensus on how development and use of this technology should be controlled. The British government's white paper this week effectively kicked the can down the road, but the EU is more hawkish. At present, only tech giants like Microsoft, Google and Meta, and nation states, possess the computing power to pioneer applications. This restricted field offers an opportunity for governments to set early ground rules. But the commercial potential of AI will make companies reluctant to disclose their secrets.

AI presents a brave new world replete with positive and negative possibilities. But whatever the good or bad, the race to commercialise it has already started. As with other new technologies, regulation will most likely be left trailing in its wake. Let's hope it is not left too late.

Think Again

The Times will not hand over journalists' notes to Ofgem

It should not have taken a Times investigation to expose the scandal of British Gas employing debt collectors to break into the homes of some of its most vulnerable customers and force-fit prepayment meters. The job of regulating Britain's dysfunctional energy market instead falls to Ofgem. Yet the watchdog did not do enough about this abhorrent practice until shamed by this newspaper. Now, having failed to fulfil its most basic responsibility to taxpayers, it is attacking The Times rather than doing its job. It can expect to be ignored.

Citing obscure powers under the 1989 Electricity Act and the 1986 Gas Act, Ofgem has demanded we hand over all the material amassed over the course of our reporting, which revealed the hitherto hidden human cost of this country's deeply dysfunctional energy market. Locksmiths were sent to the freezing homes of single parents in arrears, pay-as-you-go meters were forced upon the sick, elderly and mentally ill despite Ofgem rules that they should not be installed in the homes of the vulnerable, and customers were billed hundreds of pounds for the cost of having their houses broken into amid a cost of living crisis.

Ofgem warns that the punishment for non-compliance with its diktat to "produce to the Authority all documents in its custody or control" is criminal prosecution and an unlimited fine. The intimidation of journalists by the state is nothing new. But this behaviour is misguided and unacceptable. Having failed to rein in British Gas itself, Ofgem is now using statutory powers to attack the newspaper that did the job for it. The request in itself infringes journalistic privileges.

There is no question of The Times handing over confidential journalistic material to any authority, particularly one seeking our help to rectify its own failings. Protecting journalists' notes is a basic principle of press freedom. We intend to uphold it.

World

‘Ukraine is losing its brightest in

To the people of Chasiv Yar, Putin is the biggest slaughterer of Slavs, writes **Maxim Tucker**



The grim toll of the battle for Bakhmut is not lost on Alexander Matiash, who speaks slowly and with great exhaustion after weeks of intense fighting around Chasiv Yar.

This village a few miles west of the battered town reverberates constantly to the thump of British-made M777 howitzers, firing over Humvees and Australian Bushmaster vehicles towards the Russian lines. The crash of Russian rocket bursts comes as an inevitable response.

Matiash, 44, a special operations private, recalls an exchange of corpses last month in which four lorryloads of Russian dead were swapped for three loads of Ukrainians.

“We’re losing people with two university diplomas each, they’re losing their trash with three convictions each,” sighs Matiash, who runs a popular military video blog featuring his first-person fighting. Here, in a battle that will shape the course of the war in the east, the number of dead and dying, mostly young men in their twenties and thirties, is mounting on both sides in a fight that has lasted seven long months.

Yet international observers, including the Ministry of Defence in London, have hailed recent successes by Kyiv’s forces. Yesterday defence officials said that Russian assaults were at a “reduced level” and Wagner mercenaries — often described as President Putin’s “private army” — had been pushed back from a key supply route into Bakhmut. “Personnel shortages are likely hampering Russian offensive efforts in this sector,” the MoD said.

This was underscored by an admission from Yevgeny Prigozhin, the Wagner chief, that his forces were suffering. “The battle for Bakhmut today has already practically destroyed the Ukrainian army and, unfortunately, it has also badly damaged the Wagner private military company,” he said in an audio message.

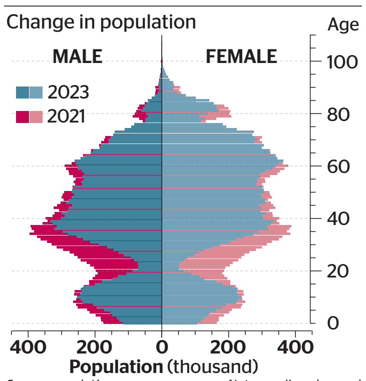
President Zelensky, who travelled to the Bakhmut area recently to meet the troops, continues to insist that the fight here must continue, despite the losses. He said yesterday that President Putin must be denied any opportunity to “sell” a victory at home or abroad. “If he will feel some blood, smell we are weak, he will push, push, push,” Zelensky told the Associated Press. “Our society will feel tired. Our society will push me to have compromise with them.”

Villages, towns and cities around Bakhmut have emptied, swelling the ranks of the eight million or so Ukrainian refugees, one fifth of the country’s population, who have fled to Europe.

In Chasiv Yar a gilded statue of the Russian writer Maxim Gorky provides an apt representation of the damage Putin’s war is doing to peoples who can trace their shared culture back 1,000 years to the foundation of the kingdom of Kyivan Rus. Gorky stands decapitated, his head and shoulders ripped off by a Russian shell.

The Kremlin began the war claiming it would protect Russian-speakers, demilitarise Ukraine and preserve the concept of family values against a decadent West. Yet across areas of Ukraine where Russian was once commonly spoken, millions have now chosen to speak Ukrainian.

War of attrition



Source: population.un.org Note: median observed

Researchers say the grinding battle and those to come will make Ukraine and Russia unrecognisable for generations to come.

“It really is awful if you look at Ukraine’s demographic tree,” Tymofiy Mylovanov, president of the Kyiv School of Economics and an adviser to Zelensky’s administration, said. “There was already a really tiny proportion of the population in their twenties. Russia has a similar problem.

“Twenty years ago it was the end of the 1990s, the collapse of the Soviet Union, really tough times, particularly in Ukraine. People just put off having children. So we were looking at losing 33 per cent of the population even without talking about the war.

“The correct approach should be to do whatever it takes for Ukraine to win and stop the war soon,” he added. “Not only for Ukraine, but for Europe to be able to reallocate defence spending back into schools and social care, to unblock supply chain issues and to safeguard democracy from the threat of Russia.”

Each side is thought to have suffered more than a hundred thousand military casualties already, with tens of thousands of Ukrainian civilians believed to have been killed as well. “Putin’s legacy will be as the biggest slaughterer of the Slavic people since the Second World War,” Mylovanov said.

Putin admitted for the first time recently that international sanctions could have “negative” consequences, reversing his previous position of insisting that Russia could adapt by trading elsewhere.

When the war finally ends, both Ukraine and Russia will have to seek migration to revive their populations, Mylovanov said. “They will have to rely . . . on a lot of migration from the post-Soviet countries, Georgia, Azerbaijan, all the stans. You can imagine people from there coming to Ukraine, as a democratic country with candidate status to the European Union.”

Zelensky insists that Ukraine and its allies must keep the pressure up. British Challenger 2 and German Leopard 2 tanks are being readied for the battlefront, and a shipload of hundreds of US infantry fighting vehicles, Strykers and Bradleys among them, docked in Germany this week, destined for Ukraine.

“He doesn’t have allies,” Zelensky said of Putin, adding that it was clear that even China was no longer willing to back Russia.

He said more should be done to target those backing Putin, who “have to know that they will lose all their money, all their real estate in Europe or in the world, their yachts everywhere”.

Despite Putin’s threats, Zelensky said he does not believe the Russian leader is prepared to use nuclear weapons on the battlefield. “If a person wants to save himself, he really … will use these,” he said. “I’m not sure he’s ready to do it.”



Kyiv backs down over monastery

Priests, monks and hundreds of Russian Orthodox faithful defied an attempt last night by the Ukrainian government to evict them from their spiritual home in Kyiv (Richard Spencer writes).

Worshippers joined monks at the Monastery of the Caves as a deadline

Fake meat? No, grazie! Italian government to ban lab-made foods

Italy
Tom Kington Rome

The Italian government has announced plans to ban synthetic meat, defying claims that test-tube steaks are good for the environment as it wages a patriotic war to defend traditional Italian food.

A government bill will forbid the creation or sale of laboratory-made foods or animal feed, with fines of up to €60,000 for violators, whose companies could be closed by the police.

“Italy is the first nation to say no to synthetic food, which we believe does not guarantee health, quality or — and I say this with pride — the protection of our culture and traditions,” Francesco Lollobrigida, Italy’s minister of agriculture and food sovereignty, said.

The development of synthetic meat, produced by culturing animal cells, is making big strides in countries such as Singapore, Israel and the US, where last November the Food and Drug Administration declared a Californian company’s lab-grown chicken safe to eat.

Italy’s bill has been introduced as Giorgia Meloni’s right-wing government focuses on backing traditional Italian food. This month it announced plans to ban EU-approved flour made from crickets in pizza and pasta. Rome is also campaigning to put Italian cuisine on Unesco’s world heritage list.

Luciano Conti, a biologist working on synthetic food at the University of Trento, argued that lab steaks could reduce the need for cows, which produce methane equivalent to about 14 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions.

Cattle farming also requires large amounts of water and leads to the destruction of natural habitats in South America.

“As the population explodes we will need protein and a way to satisfy demand for it without doubling intensive cattle farming,” he said.

“I am sad about this bill, which is protectionist and defends a culture that is not threatened by our research. The government wants food to be its banner, but shouldn’t that be up to the consumer?” he added.

Coldiretti, the farming lobby group backing the bill, claims synthetic food is a threat to Italy’s food production sector, which generates a quarter of GDP.

Ettore Prandini, the president of Coldiretti, told The Times that synthetic food was potentially harmful to health and was being introduced by tycoons with suspicious motives.

He said: “Research is financed by multinationals linked to social media and big pharmaceutical firms. If they control food too, it will be the first time in history we truly have companies more powerful than governments.”

According to Coldiretti €1.4 billion was invested in synthetic food in 2021.

Prandini added that by changing cows’ feed and turning the methane emissions from their dung into a power source, Italy had cut the greenhouse gas emissions made by its cattle to 5 per cent of the country’s total, far lower than the global average of 14 per cent.

Italians appear to back the push for real meat, with 84 per cent telling a poll commissioned by Coldiretti that they opposed lab steaks and 500,000 signing a petition against the technology.

Vittorio Castellani, a food writer, said: “In Italy, particularly the north, people are carnivores. We talk of the Mediterranean diet, but I see people in the supermarket loading up with meat.”

French farmers feel the winds of change
Page 31



Gyms where the goal is fitting in, not getting fit
Page 32

battle … Russia is losing convicts'

ROMAN PILIPEY/GETTY IMAGES; LIBKOS/AP







passed to quit in favour of the independent national church.

As snow fell on the golden domes, they prayed, sang hymns and promised peaceful resistance. Officials indicated they were backing off from a confrontation after the church applied to stay the order.

The 980-year old monastery has become a symbol of the split between the Russian Patriarch in Moscow and Ukrainian Orthodox church leaders. The government has ordered the monks to leave, accusing them of harbouring spies. Father Rustik Kainar, 34, said the eviction was illegal. "We support the Ukrainian army," he added. "We will defend ourselves by praying."

Prayers are answered in Kyiv but the battle in Bakhmut rages on

Kremlin stages missile drills after warning of 'years of confrontation'

Russia
Marc Bennetts, Michael Evans

Moscow has held drills with its Yars intercontinental ballistic missiles and warned the Russian people to prepare for years of confrontation with the West.

President Putin is seeking to make the missiles, said to have a range of 7,500 miles, the mainstay of the ground-based component of the country's nuclear arsenal.

Russia's defence ministry said 3,000 military personnel and 300 pieces of unspecified military hardware also took part in the exercises, in unnamed locations in Siberia. Video showed the Yars missiles being transported on military vehicles through a snowy landscape. No test launches were carried out, however.

The Kremlin said relations with the West had been irrevocably damaged by the war in Ukraine. "This is a hybrid war that they have unleashed against our country," Dmitry Peskov, Putin's spokesman, said. "This will go on for a long time."

Russia has sought to keep the exact tactical and technical characteristics of the Yars missiles under wraps but they are believed to be able to carry multiple independently targetable nuclear warheads and can be mounted on lorry carriers or deployed in silos.

The missiles, which were on show last year in Red Square during the Victory Day parade, were test-fired days before Russia invaded Ukraine, and again in October. Russia also test-launched its Sarmat intercontinental ballistic missile, which Putin hails as the world's most powerful, last year.

Russia announced at the weekend that it would deploy tactical nuclear weapons to neighbouring Belarus, its closest ally, in response to Britain's plans to provide Ukraine with tank shells containing depleted uranium.

Russia has the largest stockpile of nuclear weapons in the world, with about 6,000 warheads. The US has about 500 fewer but both countries have the ability to destroy the planet many times over. In February Russia suspended its participation in the New Start nuclear deal, the sole agreement on arms control between the two Cold War-era rivals. In response, Washington said on Tuesday that it would stop providing Russia with detailed data on its nuclear weapons stockpiles.

Sergei Ryabkov, Russia's deputy foreign minister, said yesterday that Moscow would no longer inform the US about its nuclear activities, including test launches.

The moves raise the risk of a nuclear miscalculation that could have catastrophic consequences, analysts say.

Russia also said this week that it would send its new Poseidon nuclear torpedoes to the Pacific Ocean early next year. The weapons, a cross between a torpedo and a naval drone, were described as "indestructible" by Putin when he revealed their development in Moscow five years ago.

The Poseidon has been described as a new type of weapon that is capable of triggering radioactive ocean swells, to render coastal cities uninhabitable.

Washington appeared set to abandon a key multimillion-dollar hypersonic missile project after another unsuccessful test flight, despite Russia firing hypersonic missiles against Ukraine.

The rapid response weapon, launched from a B-52H strategic bomber and capable of flying at five times the speed of sound, was intended to be the US air force's primary hypersonic weapon.

However, after the failed test flight last week Frank Kendall, the Pentagon's air force secretary, said research efforts would be switched to a second "more promising" programme called hypersonic attack cruise missiles, which could ultimately reach speeds of Mach 20.

Breathing problems put Pope in hospital

Vatican
Tom Kington

The Pope was admitted to a hospital in Rome yesterday after being diagnosed with a respiratory infection.

In a short statement the Vatican announced he "has complained of some breathing difficulties and he went to the Gemelli hospital to undertake some medical tests.

"The results showed a respiratory infection — with Covid 19 ruled out — which will require some days of the required medical treatment in hospital," the statment added.

His appointments for this morning were cancelled, a Vatican source told AFP, adding: "The Pope's agenda has been freed up for the possibility of further tests."

Francis, 86, appeared in good spirits while presiding over his weekly audience in St Peter's Square yesterday morning, although he appeared in pain as he was helped on to his popemobile. He began to experience chest pain shortly after the audience and was advised by his doctor to visit Gemelli for checks, Corriere della Sera reported.

Speculation mounted in 2021 that Francis would resign after an operation to remove part of his colon, while a painful knee condition has forced him to use a wheelchair.

"For my age, I'm normal," he said in January after admitting that the diverticulosis that prompted his operation had returned. "I might die tomorrow, but it's under control. I'm in good health," he said.

Francis faces a packed schedule over Easter, the busiest time in the Vatican's calendar, with a Palm Sunday Mass at the weekend followed by Holy Week and Easter celebrations next week. He is also due to visit Hungary next month.

This month he said he would retire if his closest advisers told him he was getting too old to do the job — following the example of his late predecessor, Pope Benedict, who cited failing health when he became the first pope to resign in 600 years in 2013.

Vegan activists bleat over farmer's $5 goat cuddles

Laurence Sleator

When Justin Steinmetz began offering $5 cuddles with his kid goats to visitors at his Pennsylvania farm, he hoped to make some extra money.

A year later, he and his kids are touring the state to meet demand. However, their mobile petting zoo has hit problems after "vegan extremists" accused the farm of exploitation.

The Steinmetz Family Farm was booked to provide "baby goat snuggling" at two events in April: Vegan Festival in Macungie and Veg Fest in Allentown. But vendors at the vegan festivals claimed it was "hypocritical" for organisers to charge money for people to interact with animals.

"The board of directors for each event were happy to have us and excited to draw in a crowd," the Steinmetz family said. "However, both of their inboxes as well as ours were getting flooded with some 'not so nice' messages from animal rights activists and vegan extremists about animal exploitation."

Steinmetz, 41, said: "I'm trying to monetise the business but in no way, shape or form are these animals mistreated."

Biden must not interfere in our business, demands Israel

Israel
Anshel Pfeffer Jerusalem
Joshua Thurston

Israel's besieged prime minister has rebuked President Biden for suggesting he abandon his planned reforms of the judiciary, which have prompted nationwide protests.

Binyamin Netanyahu's relationship with Biden is said to be frostier than those he had with previous US presidents, in part because of Biden's determination to restart the Iran nuclear deal.

Biden said the proposals, which were delayed by Netanyahu this week in the face of widespread unrest and protests, should not go ahead. "I hope he walks away from it," he said, calling for compromise and saying that Israel "cannot continue down this road".

The president opened his second Summit for Democracy yesterday in Washington with contributions delivered remotely by world leaders, including the Israeli prime minister. Netanyahu, 73, said Israel "makes its decisions by the will of its people and not based on pressures from abroad, including from the best of friends".

Thomas Nides, the US ambassador to Israel, suggested that Netanyahu would soon be invited to the White House, but Biden dismissed the idea. "No, not in the near term," he said. "Hopefully the prime minister will act in a way that he can try to work out some genuine compromise. But that remains to be seen."

Those comments were criticised by Itamar Ben-Gvir, the national security minister whose ultra-nationalist Jewish Power party is part of the coalition government.

He had opposed Netanyahu's decision to delay the legislation and threatened to leave the coalition. To keep him onside, Netanyahu promised to expedite a coalition agreement under which a "national guard" of volunteers would be formed, answering directly to Ben-Gvir. "We are not another star on the American flag," Ben-Gvir said.

Amichai Shikli, a cabinet minister with Netanyahu's Likud party, added: "Israel is a sovereign country. We are happy to hear criticism, but the ones who will decide who lead us and where, are the nation and just the nation, through its elected representatives, just like in America."

Another Likud MP, Nissim Vaturi, said: "If we have to defend ourselves we will do so without the United States if it doesn't support us. There was a case in the Gaza operation in 2014 when the Americans embargoed Hellfire missiles for the Apache helicopters, and Israel made do. I think that soldiers were killed because of this so-called American support."

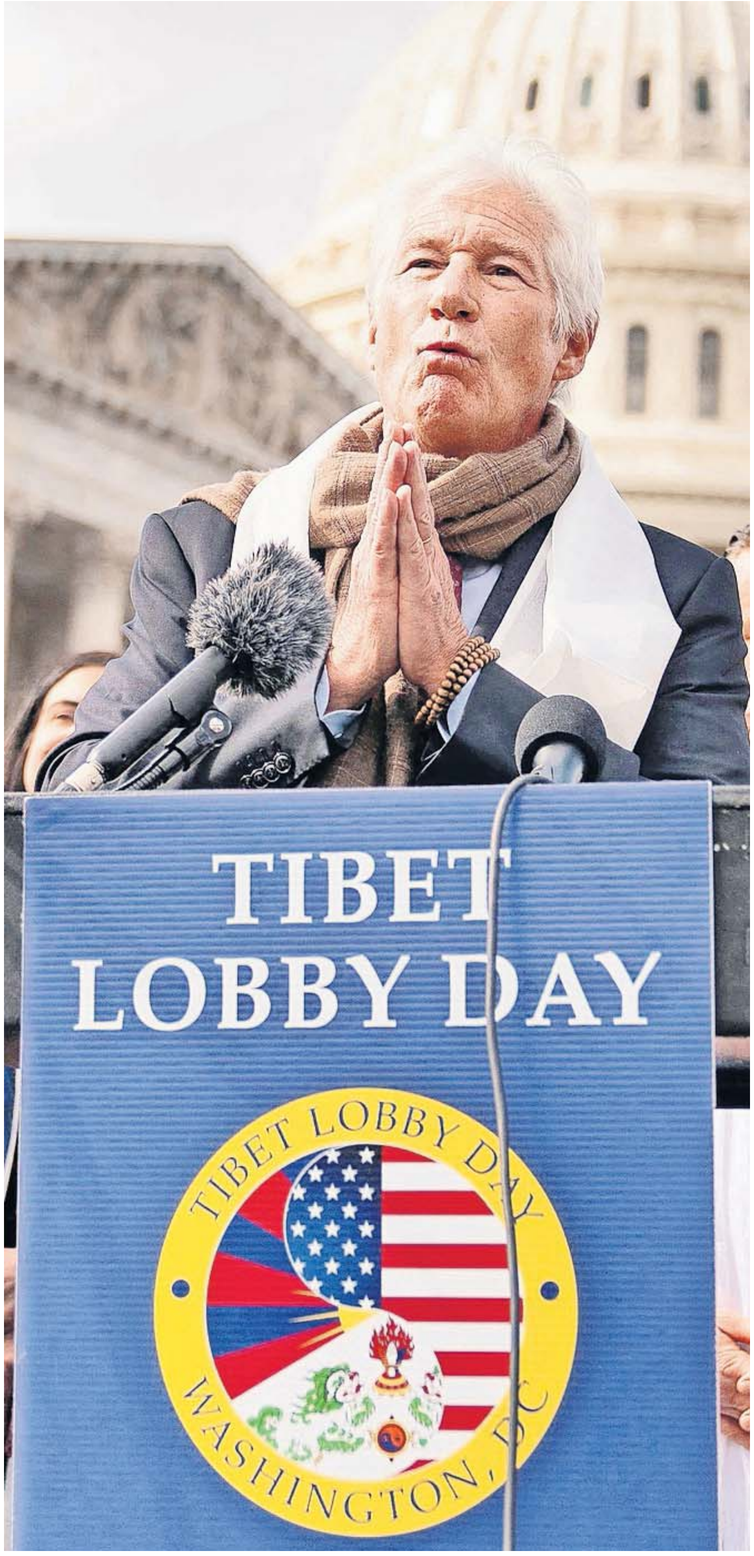
Netanyahu's proposed reforms led to about 150 protests around the country, with the biggest staged at the Knesset in Jerusalem and in central Tel Aviv, where the Ayalon motorway was blocked for hours as protesters lit bonfires and fought mounted police.

On Sunday Netanyahu admitted that his package of judicial reforms, which would end judicial oversight of government, had split the country in two and called for "an attempt to achieve broad consensus".

A day later he suggested he was acting to avoid conflict. "When there's an opportunity to avoid civil war through dialogue, I, as prime minister, am taking a timeout for dialogue," he said in a televised address.

The proposed changes would give Netanyahu, who is on trial on corruption charges, and his allies the final say in appointing judges.

STEFANI REYNOLDS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



A prayer for the victims **At a conference in Washington, Richard Gere, chairman of the International Campaign for Tibet, accused China of persecuting Tibetans**

Crew trapped in safe room after pirates attack ship

Republic of Congo
Jane Flanagan

Pirates attacked and boarded a Danish-owned tanker off the coast of west Africa, prompting the crew of 16 to barricade themselves in a safe room, the vessel's owner said.

All channels of communication have been lost with Monjasa Reformer since it was stormed by five armed men on Saturday in the Gulf of Guinea, regarded as the world's most dangerous shipping route. "It's a terrible situation. All our thoughts are with the crew and their relatives during these hours," Monjasa, the shipping company, said.

The Liberian-flagged oil and chemical tanker was sitting idle in the piracy hotspot, about 140 miles west of Port Pointe-Noire in the Republic of Congo, when the gang approached in a boat.

The crew retreated to the vessel's "citadel", Monjasa said, "in accordance with the onboard anti-piracy emergency protocol". In the last call from the ship, the crew reported the pirates were still on board.

The tanker had arrived in Congolese waters on March 18 and left on March 22, and was in international waters when it was attacked.

The Gulf of Guinea, which stretches for almost 4,250 square miles between Angola and Senegal, has replaced the coast off Somalia as the most pirate-ridden sea. Political instability, the lack of law enforcement and poverty have contributed to the increase in piracy. Many of the attacks in recent years have been by Nigerian gangs who strike out in speedboats from hideouts in the Delta region to raid vessels.

Some gangs have captured larger fishing vessels, which they use as a "mothership" to raid further out to sea.

In 2020, all but one of the world's 28 kidnappings recorded at sea occurred in these waters. Similarly, in 2018, all six hijackings at sea, and 13 of the 18 incidents of ships fired on occurred in the Gulf of Guinea.

Of the 141 hostages held at sea that year, 130 were captured by pirates here. There was a drop in incidents last year when 19 attacks were reported, compared with 35 in 2021.

China warns Tsai to 'stay put' in US hotel

China
Didi Tang Beijing

China has threatened "counterattacks" if President Tsai of Taiwan meets the US House Speaker in Los Angeles, insisting she should "stay put" in hotels.

Tsai is heading to Guatemala and Belize, which are among the few countries that formally recognise Taiwan. On April 5 she will stop in Los Angeles on her way back to Taiwan and is due to meet Kevin McCarthy, the Republican Speaker.

The news has infuriated Beijing, which opposes any official contact between Taipei and Washington and has threatened to take the island by force if necessary.



President Tsai of Taiwan will meet the US Speaker in April

Zhu Fenglian, a spokeswoman for China's Taiwan Affairs Office, said: "Tsai will be making contact with US government officials under all kinds of excuses and colluding with foreign anti-China forces, rather than staying put in airports and hotels as she should.

"If she should come into contact with McCarthy it will be another act of provocation that seriously violates the One China principle, harms China's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and destroys the peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait. We firmly oppose it, and we must take measures for resolute counterattacks."

Cross-strait relations plunged last summer when Nancy Pelosi, McCarthy's predecessor as Speaker, visited Taiwan. Beijing responded by firing missiles toward the island and staged live-fire military drills, in effect blockading the island for days.

After Tsai, of the Democratic Progressive Party, was elected president in 2016, Beijing ratcheted up diplomatic and military pressure, fuelling worries that President Xi may order an attack. Tsai's party leans toward independence but she has said there is no need to declare it.

The US, the island's strongest ally, has stepped up support for Taiwan to deter any invasion. Last week John Kirby, a spokesman for the US National Security Council, said Tsai's transit through the US was "not uncommon" and that it was "unofficial and personal in nature".

Ma Ying-jeou, Tsai's predecessor, is in China this week on a trip billed as a visit to ancestral homes.

Ma, of the opposition Kuomintang Party, said people on the two sides of the strait belonged to the same Chinese nation but made repeated references to the Republic of China, which is Taiwan's official name.

Over the counter nasal spray for opioid overdose

United States
David Charter Washington

Narcan, a nasal spray that reverses opioid overdoses, has been cleared for sale over the counter by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) as America battles a worsening drugs crisis.

The medication was available only on prescription but health officials pressed for it to be more convenient to help reduce the number of drug deaths.

More than a million people have died from overdoses in the two decades since the figures were first collected.

The FDA said that in the 12 months to October last year, 101,750 people died from overdoses, mostly from fentanyl, the synthetic opioid. In 2021 deaths rose by 15 per cent from the year before.

Narcan is the best known form of naloxone, the opioid reversal drug. The medicine rapidly reverses or blocks the effects of opioids, restoring normal breathing, especially when administered within minutes.

The ruling lets the medicine be sold online as well as in convenience stores, supermarkets and petrol stations.

José Benitez, from Prevention Point Philadelphia, which hands out free naloxone, said: "Putting it on the shelves is going to allow people to pick it up, not have stigma attached to it and readily access this life-saving drug."

Benitez said some people had been wary applying for a prescription, fearing their health insurer might find out.

Keith Humphreys, an addiction expert at Stanford University, California, said there were fears that people who bought Narcan over the counter might not know how to use it properly.

Pharmacists could show customers how to use it, he said. Humphreys added that there were fears manufacturers could stop producing the drug if sales were not profitable.

Children under 14 to be banned from riding e-scooters on streets of France

Charles Bremner

French children will have to be at least 14 before they can ride e-scooters on the streets, the government has ruled.

President Macron's administration wants to tame urban e-scooter behaviour in light of mounting concerns over their usage, while avoiding an outright ban. However, Anne Hidalgo, the left-wing mayor of Paris, wants to hold a referendum on the matter on Sunday, which could see the city's 15,000 scooters disappear.

Parisians are worried by the high accident rate and riders' disregard for the rules of the road, with many ignoring traffic lights or riding on the pavement. There are about 2.5 million users in France, with the scooters permitted only on cycle lanes and urban streets.

Announcing the rise in the minimum age from 12 to 14, Clément Beaune, the transport minister, accused Hidalgo of manipulating the non-binding vote to favour a ban rather than promoting measures to regulate a fast-growing mode of transport that provides an alternative to polluting vehicles. "It's an important vote that will be watched by many other towns in France and abroad. I regret that they have caricatured the question and simplified the debate," he said.

"Instead of for and against, they could have had [a choice] in favour of the scooters with regulation. We have to move from amateurism to creating a framework and calming the public space," he told a news conference. "E-scooters can be an opportunity if they are well organised and well regulated". He said 20 per cent of riders chose them over polluting transport.

Under the new law the fine for offences such as carrying a passenger, using the pavement or running a red light is to rise from €35 to €135. Despite calls from doctors and accident victims and their families, helmets will not be made compulsory, Beaune said, adding that they would deter users and that the law would be impossible to enforce.

A study found injuries were four times more likely on e-scooters than on bicycles. The small wheels are seen as less stable, with riders often being thrown forward in accidents rather than falling to the side, as with a bicycle.

Farmers caught in winds of change

France

Constance Kampfner Corrèze

ANDIA/UNIVERSAL IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES; STEPHANIE PARA/MAXPPP FOR THE TIMES





Catherine Donnedevie, a cattle farmer, is leading the campaign to save the rolling hills of Corrèze from wind farms

With its rolling hills and green fields, the bucolic central French region of Corrèze looks a picture of calm. But beneath the peaceful veneer, violent disputes are tearing this community apart amid President Macron's drive for renewable energy.

Bitter disputes have divided its farmers. "I had one of my barns set alight with my cows inside," Jean-Luc Soustrot, 47, of SaintPardoux-la-Croisille, said. "I burnt my arm trying to get them out but I still lost nine. Later I was told there had been outside interference."

Soustrot believed he was targeted because, like several other farmers, he agreed to have a wind farm on his land.

The developers offered him several thousand euros a year in exchange for the lease. The guaranteed income was attractive to Soustrot, who was finding it increasingly difficult to make a living from the dwindling subsidies. Others, however, took a different view.

"People who sign up to this don't realise the impact these 200m monstrosities are going to have on others," Marie-Jo Pailleau, 67, a resident of nearby Champagnac-la-Prune, said. "There would be no escaping them, wherever you are. They just see it as easy money but it's our heritage they're attacking."

Pailleau is among a group of residents who have spent the past decade battling in town halls and the courts to block such projects.

Corrèze is an understated département that has produced three popes and two presidents, Jacques Chirac and François Hollande. With a small population across rolling hills, forests and small farms, the region clings to its privacy. "Everyone knows whose family was on which side during the war but you never mention it," Pailleau said.

This issue, however, has become personal. Residents speak of the turbines as of a plague sweeping the area.

Until recently, their efforts to block the projects had been successful. But the winds are changing.

France is behind on its development of renewable energies, having for too long relied on its ageing nuclear fleet. In 2020, renewables accounted for 19.1 per cent of the country's total consumption, below the 23 per cent target it had set itself and a lower share than elsewhere in Europe. Britain's renewable rate, for example, stands at about 40 per cent.

Macron has vowed to go "twice as fast" on wind and solar power. Parliament passed a bill this year to accelerate their development by streamlining procedures and abolishing the right of local mayors to veto projects. Prefects, representatives of the state at the regional level, will instead have the final say.

The new prefect, Étienne Desplanques, recently approved two wind farms in the north of Corrèze and is determined to build more. "Unlike other départements in the region, Corrèze has very few wind turbines," he said. He added that developers would have to invest in communities to compensate for the disturbance.

Locals who oppose the turbines look enviously across the Channel, where stringent rules have meant a de facto ban on onshore wind turbines. Only two wind farms went ahead in England last year. These residents raise a range of objections. They are concerned about the impact on house prices and tourism. They also worry about the effects on the region's birds, bats and frogs.

Their core argument, however, is that the area has relatively low winds. "We already have five dams that export energy to the rest of France," Jacques Bombal, 76, said. "We produce enough energy to be almost self-sufficient."

Bombal's garden would face the turbines planned for the hills over Champagnac-la-Prune. "Why are they trying to install wind turbines where there isn't any wind?" he asked. "It's assaulting small communities for peanuts." Desplanques dismisses such arguments. "These are private companies installing the turbines," he said. "So if there's no wind, there's no money."

The development on Soustrot's land was abandoned, having lost community support. He said second-home owners or people like Pailleau and Bombal, with family ties to the region but who have spent much of their lives in cities, were often those fighting hardest to block the turbines.

Catherine Donnedevie, a cattle farmer who leads the campaign against wind farms, said this was not a class war. "I answer calls every day from people I don't know who are far away in Corrèze," she said. "I'm not fighting for me but for the whole département."

Building work forces closure of top Berlin museum until 2037

Germany

Oliver Moody Berlin

One of Berlin's best-known museums, built to house the spectacular Pergamon Altar from an ancient Greek kingdom, will be closed for a "bewildering" €1.6 billion renovation that will not be completed until 2037 at the earliest.

The Pergamon museum complex on the city's Museum Island was built from 1910 to 1930. It has been in an increasingly dilapidated state for decades, however. Damage inflicted during the Second World War and neglect by the socialist East German regime have left parts of its south wing at risk of collapse, with leaky pipes, extensive damp problems and structural faults in the glass roofs over its courtyards.

The Pergamon Altar itself, the main attraction, has been out of bounds to visitors since 2014. The restoration of the surrounding building is running four years behind schedule and is expected to take until 2027.

At 35 metres wide and 33m deep (116ft by 109ft), the altar is much too large to be moved. It has been encased in scaffolding and carefully air-conditioned so that the marble is not damaged during the works.

Other monuments, such as the 2nd century BC market gate of Miletus and the 2,500-year-old Ishtar gate and processional avenue from ancient Babylon, will be treated similarly. The glass roof above the Ishtar gate will have to be exchanged without damaging it.

The Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation, which oversees Berlin's state collections of art and antiquities, said the museum's south wing was in a "very poor structural condition". It warned that parts of the building could fall down and damage the exhibits unless they were extensively rebuilt over the next 14 years.

"The urgent need for renovation results, among other things, from severe water damage to the façades and roofs," it said. "This can be attributed to war damage, but also to the entirely inadequate maintenance over the decades until German reunification [in 1990]."

Against a backdrop of runaway inflation in the German construction sector, the next round of work is predicted to cost nearly €1.2 billion, on top of the €489 million already spent on the north wing.

While there is consensus on the acute need for repairs, some sections of the German press have heavily criticised the way the plans have been handled. Die Welt newspaper described the costs and delay as "shocking", asking its readers rhetorically: "Is this mammoth project mad or urgently necessary? Sadly it's both."

Secret files show that FBI snooped on Ivana Trump

David Charter Washington

Ivana Trump, the first wife of the former president, was investigated by the FBI's counterintelligence division over allegations connected to her native Czechoslovakia, according to secret files released under freedom of information laws.

Heavily redacted documents suggest that an intensive inquiry was launched in the 1990s into the former skier and model. They do not reveal the nature of the suspicions that triggered the investigation.

The 190 pages of previously secret FBI papers are part of a file on Ivana Trump that runs to almost 900 pages, more of which are expected to be released next month.

Obtained under a freedom of information request by Bloomberg, they show that the FBI had "recommended a preliminary inquiry be opened on Ivana Trump" based on information from a confidential source in 1989.

One document from 1990 suggested that the agency was investigating a man with ties to communist Czechoslovakian intelligence who arranged sham marriages and was believed to have some connection with Ivana. The man was referenced as a "leading member of the Czechoslovak artistic/intellectual community" who sometimes arranged fake marriages and "fortuitous relationships". He was interviewed by the FBI but details were redacted.

Born Ivana Marie Zelnickova in Zlin, now in the Czech Republic but then behind the Iron Curtain, she was able to travel out of the country through competitive skiing. She eventually married Alfred Winklmayr, an Austrian ski instructor friend, obtaining citizenship there. She divorced Winklmayr and moved to Canada and then to the United States, where she met Donald Trump at a modelling event in 1976.

They married the following year in New York and had three children — Donald Jr, Ivanka and Eric — before divorcing in 1990.

At no point in the released information is Ivana accused of a crime, and there was no suggestion that she was involved in any wrongdoing.

Ivana Trump died last July, aged 73, from a fall at her home in New York.

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Gyms where fitting in is more important than keeping fit

United States
Will Pavia New York

Not long ago, gyms were places that offered painful-sounding experiences for a monthly fee and the tacit understanding that you might not show up as often as you intended.

Now there is a new type of fitness centre whose proprietors might not let you come at all. Gaining admission requires an application, an interview and assurances about your intentions. As with some golf clubs, you might need a referral from a well-placed member.

"I decided early on that our memberships should be application-based and should be capped," said Aqib Mamoon, the chief executive and founder of Ghost, in Brooklyn, a $300-a-month fitness club said to cater to "thought leaders, creatives, founders or executives".

Mamoon said he did not exclude anyone on the basis of their profession but was seeking to create a more intimate environment for his clients.

"I don't quite consider Ghost a gym," he told The Times via email. "Certainly, it is a space where one might work out. But more broadly, we're building community and culture through a new iteration of wellness destinations."

At Heimat, a gym that opened in Los Angeles last year where membership costs $350 a month, many hopefuls were said to have been turned away.

Sebastian Schoepe, chief executive of RSG Group North America, which owns the gym, told The New York Times he did not want clients who "look at a gym as a selfie opportunity, a place solely dedicated to performance-orientated training or a workout that needs to be done".

He said: "We are not looking to bring in people who keep to themselves and don't see the value of mingling with like-minded people."

Also in Los Angeles, in an alleyway building with the anonymity of a speakeasy, stands Forma Pilates, where entry is by referral only. The group has two gyms in New York that also require that you know someone on the inside. Referring to the goings-on behind the frosted glass, The Wall Street Journal said it was "the Pilates class you'll probably never get in to".

John Atwood, managing partner of Atwood Consulting in Boston, which advises health and fitness clubs, said this new tier of gyms began popping up about eight years ago.

Before that, certain gyms were more restrictive because they happened to have very particular clients, he said. There was the Houstonian Club in Texas, where the Bush family worked out, and the Granite Club in Beverly Hills, California, which catered for various film stars.

"They have an entrance in a back alley," he said. "If I was Tom Cruise, I would want a lot of privacy [at my gym]. I totally understand that."

He added of the new exclusive gyms that operate like country clubs: "Some of these places are about wanting to make sure you are committed to your goals."

But he worries about the message they send in a country where 40 per cent of adults are obese. "The rich get richer, the fit get fitter [and] there is no middle class left of fit, well people," he said.

Actor sorry for tweets on trans roles

Joshua Thurston

Guy Pearce has apologised for suggesting that all actors should be free to play transgender roles.

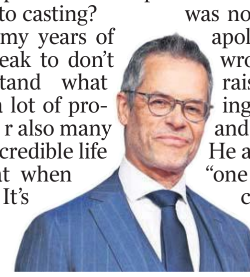
The Australian star of *Memento* and *LA Confidential* deleted a tweet that read: "A question — if the only people allowed to play trans characters r trans folk, then r we also suggesting the only people trans folk can play r trans characters? Surely that will limit ur career as an actor? Isn't the point of an actor to be able [to] play anyone outside ur own world?"

When critics of that stance argued that the few trans roles available in Hollywood should go to under-represented transgender actors, Pearce, who portrayed a drag queen in the 1994 film *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*, replied: "That's a very different point. Why should one's personal position be relevant when it comes to casting?

"I have to say in all my years of work, most people I speak to don't truly actually understand what acting entails. There r a lot of projections going on. There r also many people out there with incredible life experience who fall flat when [the] camera is rolling. It's an art form." Pearce deleted the tweets overnight and apologised for his remarks, calling them insensitive.

"I see that raising the question of gender identity within the casting process on a platform like Twitter was not a good idea. For that I apologise, enormously," he wrote. "The point I wanted to raise was one about defending the definition of acting and nothing more."

He admitted that singling out "one minority group, in particular, was unnecessary, especially from a man like me, with a 'Full House' of privilege".



Guy Pearce called his remarks "insensitive"

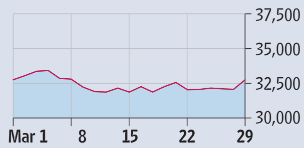
Business

WORLD MARKETS (Change on the day)

FTSE 100
7,564.27 (+80.02)▲

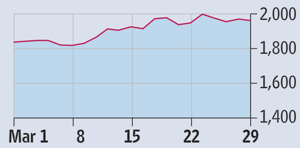


Dow Jones
32,717.60 (+323.35)▲

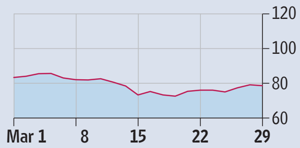


COMMODITIES

Gold
$1,962.02 (-6.65)

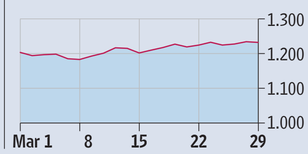


Brent crude (6pm)
$78.39 (-0.73)▼

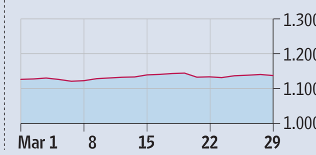


CURRENCIES

£/$
$1.2311 (-0.0036)▼



£/€
€1.1372 (-0.0013)▼



Bank calls for pensions clampdown in wake of mini-budget turmoil

Ben Martin Banking Editor

The pensions industry watchdog has come under pressure from the Bank of England to clamp down on the leveraged funds at the heart of the autumn meltdown in bond markets.

The Bank's financial policy committee yesterday urged the Pensions Regulator to act "as soon as possible" to mitigate the risks to stability posed by liability-driven investment funds. Pension schemes, which use such funds to manage their investment portfolios, were thrown into turmoil after September's mini-budget triggered a sell-off in government bonds, pushing up borrowing costs. This caused financial chaos and forced the Bank to intervene by buying £19.3 billion of bonds to stabilise the market.

Threadneedle Street told the pensions watchdog that liability-driven investment funds should have enough liquidity to withstand, at a minimum, a jump in gilt yields of 2.5 percentage points. That compares with the 1.6 percentage point rise that poleaxed the LDI industry last year.

Charles Counsell, chief executive of the Pensions Regulator, said it noted the Bank's recommendations and would update its guidance on liability-driven investments next month.

The new rules were revealed in the latest quarterly update from the financial policy committee, which is seeking to bolster the financial system amid stresses caused by sharp rises in interest rates. Higher rates caused the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank this month, which shook markets and in turn forced an emergency rescue of Credit Suisse.

The committee warned that emerging areas of concern were leveraged loans, high-yield bonds and private credit, which make up the riskier end of the corporate debt markets. It said that these markets had almost doubled in size in the past decade and signs of stress "could cause a rapid reassessment of risks by investors, potentially resulting in sharp revaluations". Regulators' ability to assess the risks were hampered by a lack of data, which the committee said it would try to improve.

The Bank also plans to tighten the rules on money market funds.

Crackdown to avert shadow banking shocks, page 36

Treasury's £2bn home loans profit

Help to Buy windfall revealed as scheme ends

Tom Howard

The Treasury is almost £2 billion in profit on loans it made under the Help to Buy house purchase scheme, which formally comes to an end tomorrow.

Since it was launched in 2013 — by George Osborne when he was chancellor — more than 375,000 loans have been made by the government to people looking to buy their first home. On average, they borrowed £62,000.

According to Homes England, the government's "housing accelerator", on each of the loans the UK Treasury is on average £4,700 in profit, on paper at least. Assuming house prices stay roughly where they are, that means the government stands to make a profit of about £1.8 billion from Help to Buy.

The scheme involves equity loans, meaning that the Treasury, and thus the taxpayer, owns part of the houses and is entitled to any rise in prices, proportional to the size of its loan. So someone with a 20 per cent equity loan who sells their house for £10,000 more than they paid would need to repay £2,000 to the government on top of the initial value of the loan.

According to data from Nationwide, house prices in the UK have risen by about 54 per cent since Help to Buy was introduced. Since the start of the pandemic three years ago, average prices have increased by nearly 20 per cent.

As of March last year, about a quarter of all Help to Buy loans had been repaid, for which the Treasury received £5.52 billion, having originally lent £5.05 billion. The Treasury has written Help to Buy loans of nearly £24 billion, which have been used to buy homes worth £105 billion. Those figures date from September, so the final tallies will be higher. On top of the capital gains to which the government is entitled, it has also racked up millions of pounds in interest payments. In the 2021-22 financial year, these came to £34.3 million.

Help to Buy was introduced to get more people into homes, to get more houses built and to stimulate the economy. Developers say it worked: hundreds of thousands of people used the scheme to get on the property ladder; twice as many houses were built last year than in 2013; and £63 billion in economic activity has been generated by Help to Buy, according to the Home Builders Federation.

However, some critics called it "Help to Profit", in reference to developers' financial performances and the bonuses afforded to some executives — most notably Jeff Fairburn, the former chief executive of Persimmon, who was paid more than £75 million. A House of Lords report last year blamed Help to Buy for pushing up house prices and concluded that the money would have been "better spent on increasing housing supply".

From Saturday, there will be no incentive scheme targeted at first-time buyers for the first time in decades. "Builders can only build if buyers can buy," the HBF said. It added that would-be buyers' ambitions would be thwarted by the withdrawal of the scheme.

The Treasury said Help to Buy loans "have helped thousands get on the property ladder and provided extra revenue to pump into public services".

STEFAN WERMUT/REUTERS



UBS's outgoing chief, Ralph Hamers, prepares his successor at the bank, Sergio Ermotti, for a press conference

Collared for the top job

Sergio Ermotti may have left UBS three years ago, but the board of the lender has brought back the bank's former boss to handle its merger with Credit Suisse. At present chairman of Swiss Re, the insurance firm, Ermotti's nationality helped: he is Swiss, unlike Ralph Hamers, UBS's present boss, who is Dutch. Colm Kelleher, the UBS chairman, said that factor had helped "at the margin".

The rescue deal, engineered by Swiss authorities, is controversial in the country since the two banks could benefit from $280 billion in state and central bank support, roughly equal to a third of the Switzerland's GDP. Most of that is liquidity that should be repaid, while the government will absorb some losses on the deal.

Pages 38-39

Charges stack up for former crypto boss

Callum Jones
US Business Correspondent

Sam Bankman-Fried, founder of the collapsed FTX cryptocurrency exchange, will face new charges at a court hearing in New York today.

The former billionaire has been accused of more crimes, including the orchestration of an illegal campaign donation scheme to build influence in Washington and the payment of a $40 million bribe to Chinese officials. Bankman-Fried pleaded not guilty after he was initially charged last year with eight offences, including fraud and conspiracy. His spokesman declined to comment on the latest charges.

A judge this week approved tougher bail conditions for Bankman-Fried, 31, who prosecutors said had tried to contact executives this year at the now-bankrupt FTX. He has been under house arrest, with restricted access to the internet, at his parents' home in Palo Alto, California. Under the new arrangements, a security guard will be stationed outside to ensure that visitors do not provide him with unauthorised devices able to go online.

FTX filed for bankruptcy in November. Bankman-Fried resigned as chief executive after struggling to raise money to stave off collapse while traders rushed to withdraw $6 billion from the platform in only 72 hours. Once one of the world's biggest cryptocurrency platforms, valued at $32 billion, its abrupt implosion sent shock waves throughout the wider sector.

Bankman-Fried is allowed to use only a basic mobile phone, without internet access, and a limited laptop computer. He can access pre-agreed websites to help to prepare his defence, including FTX pages and court archives, as well as news, sports, streaming and food takeaway sites. The former FTX boss was extradited in December from the Bahamas, where he lived, and was released on a $250 million bond to house arrest at his parents' home. They have agreed not to bring banned devices into their house or to give him the passwords for their own hardware.

Need to know

1 Jeremy Hunt has accused President Biden of leading a "distortive" global subsidy race with his $400 billion green investment package. Writing in The Times today, the chancellor warns against protectionism and says that Britain will not go "toe to toe" with the United States and the European Union by offering billions in green subsidies and tax breaks. Page 1

2 The Treasury is almost £2 billion in profit on loans it made under the Help to Buy house purchase scheme, which ends tomorrow. Page 33

3 Sam Bankman-Fried, founder of the FTX cryptocurrency exchange, faces a court hearing in New York today over new charges after his empire collapsed. He has been accused of more crimes, including orchestrating an illegal campaign donation scheme to build influence in Washington and the payment of a $40 million bribe to Chinese officials. Page 33

4 UBS has ditched its chief executive and is bringing back a former boss in a surprise management switch nine days after agreeing to the rescue purchase of Credit Suisse. Sergio Ermotti, chairman of Swiss Re, the insurer, will replace Ralph Hamers as chief executive from April 5, the Swiss bank said. Pages 33, 38-39

5 The pensions industry watchdog has come under pressure from the Bank of England to clamp down on the leveraged funds at the heart of the autumn meltdown in bond markets. Page 34

6 The City regulator is pressing ahead with a plan to shake-up the stock market listing regime amid fears that London is losing business to overseas financial centres.

7 The government will not reverse post-financial crisis banking regulation, Jeremy Hunt has said, amid concerns that Britain is loosening post-Brexit rules for the City. Page 36

8 Mortgage approvals have risen for the first time since August in a sign that the "worst may be in the past", Bank of England figures show. The number of mortgages approved for house purchases beat economists' expectations to reach 43,500 in February, up from 39,600 in January. Page 39

9 The water industry's to-do list is daunting: fix lingering leaks; stem foul flooding from overflowing sewers; address poor customer service; cope with recurrent droughts. Then there is the sector's £60 billion debt. Now, after years of criticism over poor performance, it seems the industry regulator is finally getting tough. Pages 40-41

10 The competition watchdog has ruled out an in-depth investigation of Farfetch's deal to buy a stake in Yoox Net-a-Porter. Richemont, the luxury goods group, agreed to sell its 47.5 per cent stake in the online fashion retailer last year in a deal that valued the business at about £880 million. Page 41

Next bracing for 'challenge' as profits rise

Helen Cahill

Profits at Next have exceeded expectations as the high street retailer shrugs off the strain of the cost of living crisis.

However, after revealing that pre-tax profits had risen by 5.7 per cent to £870 million in the year to the end of January on the back of sales up by 8 per cent at £5.1 billion, the high street stalwart also warned of a "difficult year" ahead. It maintained its prediction of a sales decline of 1.5 per cent in the present financial year and a drop in profit to £795 million.

It said price rises in the second half would be "materially lower" than previously feared thanks to a reduction in shipping costs and a drop in prices paid for factory goods. The fashion and homewares seller will increase prices by only 3 per cent in the autumn and winter, rather than the 6 per cent figure it had planned previously.

Lord Wolfson of Aspley Guise, its chief executive, said: "The year ahead looks like it will be challenging. The combination of inflation in our cost base and top-line sales, which are likely to edge backwards, is uncomfortable. But the company is well-prepared. Looking through next year to the longer term, our prospects feel more positive than for some time."

The company outlined plans for expansion through building its relationships with third parties, investing in other companies and developing its brand overseas. Nevertheless, its share price fell by 292p, or 4.3 per cent, to £64.34 as City analysts questioned the company's future growth prospects.

Shore Capital, the broker, called Next's recent earnings-per-share performance "lacklustre" and said it was not convinced that the retailer's strategy would deliver growth for investors. "Despite weathering significant shocks over the past eight years, including the shift from retail to online, the pandemic and the cost of living squeeze, the company's earnings-per-share growth rate in the years ahead is expected to be modest," its analysts said. "With profits set to decline, we question its prospects for longer-term growth."

Wolfson, 55, said the company expected inflation to continue to squeeze discretionary spending, but added that pressures on household budgets should start to ease this year.

He said: "Are we past peak inflation? I can only speak for Next, but I think once we get through next autumn and winter then we are. I can't see any signs of inflation picking up again in the following year. That doesn't mean it won't happen, but I can't see any evidence of that at the moment."

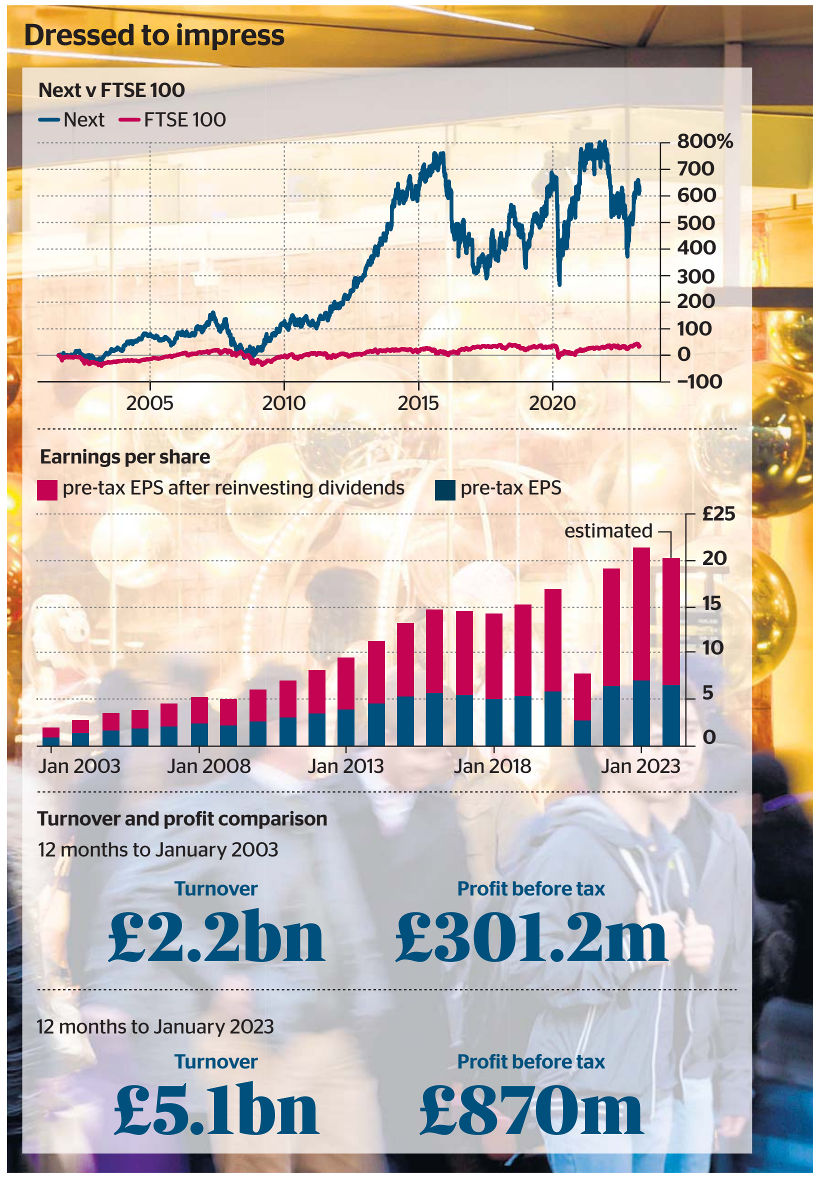
City-centre sales increased by 23 per cent on a like-for-like basis as shopping habits continued to return to patterns seen before the pandemic. Sales in regional shopping centres and retail parks declined by 7 per cent and 3 per cent, respectively.

Next has been buying businesses out of administration to incorporate on to its "Total Platform", which offers services such as marketing, warehousing and distribution to third-party brands. Sales on the platform leapt by 269 per cent to £144.4 million.

The FTSE 100 retailer has purchased the Cath Kidston brand recently. The deal came after Next bought assets of Made.com for £3.4 million and Joules for £34 million when those retailers collapsed last year. Next said it had generated profit of £16.8 million from investments but would not be pursuing growth "at any cost" as it sizes up new acquisitions.

"It is all too easy for companies to lose sight of the fact that assets that deliver modest growth and healthy cashflow are very valuable," it said. "Too many 'mature' companies have been sacrificed at the altar of 'growth'. It is a well-trodden path that has littered corporate history with the carcasses of ruined companies."

Wolfson declined to comment yesterday on whether Next would form a partnership with or invest in John Lewis after it emerged that the department stores group was looking to raise £2 billion in outside investment. He said: "We're not theological about this. We want to invest in great brands, with good management, at the right price, where we can add value— and as long as we can tick those four boxes, then we are open for business."



Wolfson's six rules for how to run a business

Lord Wolfson of Aspley Guise, the longest-serving chief executive of a FTSE 100 company, has learnt a thing or two about running a business in his 22 years at the helm of Next, having delivered compound annual growth of 14.1 per cent in earnings per share over the past two decades.

In the retailer's annual results, Wolfson set out his six rules for creating the right company culture.

1. Take decisions and make things happen Colleagues do not need permission to take decisions, taking sensible decisions is a requirement of their job. We do not take minutes at our meetings, we only take action points. Whatever is said at a meeting, all that matters is what happens as a result. If there were no actions, the chances are it was a wasted meeting. You will be judged by the things you make happen, not by the infographics you put in a "deck".

2. Change is everyone's job This follows on from taking decisions. Managing change is part of everyone's job; we do not have a "change" department or a

London considers shake-up of key listings rules

Ben Martin Banking Editor

The City regulator is pressing ahead with a plan to shake-up the stock market listing regime amid fears that London is losing business to overseas financial centres.

The Financial Conduct Authority said yesterday that it would start a consultation on its proposal to simplify the rules by replacing the premium and standard segments of the London market with a single category.

The plan comes amid intensifying concerns in government about the City's status as an international financial hub after Arm, the Cambridge-based technology company, revealed that it had chosen to list in New York. CRH, the FTSE 100 building materials supplier, also has said it will switch its primary stock market listing from London to New York, while Flutter Entertainment, the FTSE 100 gambling group behind Betfair, is examining a similar move.

A trio of government-commissioned reviews in recent years have suggested ways that the listing rules could be changed to improve competitiveness. The FCA has already taken forward some of these recommendations by loosening the free-float requirements and relaxing restrictions around companies with dual-class share structures in late 2021. However, scrapping the premium and standard segments would be a more far-reaching change and could increase risks for investors.

Under the existing rules, companies in the premium category must adhere to tougher governance rules than those that opt for a standard listing. Only companies in the premium segment are eligible for inclusion in FTSE indices, which are influential in the markets because they are tracked by passive funds.

Nikhil Rathi, the FCA chief executive, said some investors had told the watchdog that the "premium listing standards are burdensome and deter some companies, even when allowing for the benefits of UK index inclusion".

As part of the switch to a single segment, companies would no longer be required to demonstrate a three-year record of financial performance before listing, nor would they be required to hold shareholder votes on big deals and related-party transactions. However, loosening the rules to make them more flexible would require a change in attitude towards risk in the UK market and this would require debate, Rathi warned. "Are we ready for such an approach?" he asked.

● New York has caught up with London as a financial hub, the City of London Corporation says in research that will fuel concerns about Britain's financial services (Ben Martin writes). The governing body of the Square Mile said it was the first time London had not been "the clear leader". Chris Hayward, its policy chairman, warned its "competitive advantage is at risk", adding: "A long-term plan to stimulate financial and professional services growth is needed."

ALAMY



Source: S&P Capital IQ

"transformation" director, nor do we have a battalion of business project managers operating outside business as usual. Change and transformation are part of all of our work; we all take on new projects; there is no "business as usual" because our business constantly changes.

3. Create value and make profit We do not make "strategic" investments, we invest for a return on our shareholders' money. All our activities, in one way or another, must work towards that goal.

4. Keep it simple and speak in plain English You will achieve so much more. Business jargon is so unhelpful because it makes simple things sound complicated. It also excludes people who are unfamiliar with this insider language. And if we use clear, easily understood language, everyone can contribute and make our actions more effective.

5. Be open, honest and considerate in your dealings with others Life is too short to spend it with people who are unpleasant and teams that get on well together are more likely to achieve their aims. So treat those around you well. Remember, you are not competing with the other people in Next. They are on your side, and if you are not on their side you are doing something wrong.

6. Be demanding but never nasty There is a world of difference between being demanding and being nasty. Whatever your job, you will likely need to give people uncomfortable feedback, occasionally very uncomfortable. At Next we are demanding but also considerate and polite. You do not need to be nasty to succeed: leadership in business does not require you to act like a monster or scramble over those around you; in our experience, quite the reverse.

Of course, many of us (including me), on occasion deviate from these ideals, particularly when we get frustrated, but our aspirations are very clear.



'Strip Treasury of its investment powers'

Mehreen Khan Economics Editor

The Treasury should be stripped of its power to control public investment, a think tank has said, warning that Britain's chronically weak investment levels were an "institutional failure of the British state".

In a report highlighting the continued weakness of private and public sector investment, the Resolution Foundation said radical solutions were needed to improve the UK's performance, including giving parliament and local governments more power over spending that could boost growth.

The foundation said that the chancellor's self-imposed fiscal rules were consigning Britain to a "low-investment nation" that had slipped behind its peers in the G7. The fiscal rules, which limit the debt and deficit as a percentage of gross domestic product, do not make an exception for investment spending, which is included as part of the government's broader expenditure.

James Smith, research director at the foundation, said the rules were being used to cut investment in bad economic times to meet the chancellor's targets. On average, investment had been reduced by 20 per cent after big recessions since the 1970s, it found.

"We need to completely reset our approach to public investment, rewriting the UK's fiscal framework to remove the strong incentive for the Treasury to cut public investment when bad news turns up and moving decisions about the quantity of public investment to parliament from the Treasury," he said.

"Too often we are living off our past rather than investing in our future. Turning that around means big changes to public investment."

The think tank said Britain had the most volatile investment plans of any rich world economy as frequent changes in government had led to policy priorities continually being ditched in favour of new ones. The instability meant that the Treasury failed to spend £1 in every £6 to which it committed.

It called for a system where parliament would pass an act committing the government of the day to an agreed level of investment spending.

Healthcare, public transport and housing were some of the areas that required a spending boost and would lead to a short-term increase in the national debt, the think tank said.

Boss's Next step may be a big one



BUSINESS COMMENTARY *Alistair Osborne*

That's markets for you. Sometimes they look at the black coat, not the sparkly dress. After a squint at the Next chief's full-year results, they marked the shares down 4 per cent to £64.34 — and by more initially. Did they forget who's running this show? Or overlook what he was really saying?

Lord Wolfson of Aspley Guise is renowned for kicking off the new financial year with conservative guidance — and then going on to beat it. The longest-serving boss of a FTSE 100 company has been at it since 2001. So, having pitched up with a 5.7 per cent rise in profits to £870 million pre-tax (£10 million ahead of guidance, natch), he was always unlikely to lift his forecast of a drop this year to £795 million.

He came up with that estimate only in January. And, as he put it, "no one would thank us if we raised guidance today only to bring it down again in two months' time". Besides, he sees a "challenging" year ahead, with the "uncomfortable" mix of "inflation in our cost base and top-line sales, which are likely to edge backwards". He's shooting for a 1.5 per cent fall in full-price sales to £4.5 billion and, as he says, "no one really knows" how the cost of living squeeze will pan out.

So all a bit gloomy for those solely focused on his lordship's outerwear. Beneath that, though, he was sporting something far more colourful — a "big picture" view of where the retailer could be heading. That's what investors should be focusing on. Wolfson admitted to only "modest growth" over the past eight years. But, tellingly, he reckons Next now has "far more ideas and opportunities for long-term growth than it has had for some time".

The foundation for that is a business no longer grappling with the big shock to the retail market: the structural shift in shopping to online. Next is now down to 466 stores, having shut unprofitable ones, while it's negotiated rent cuts when renewing leases — of up to 58 per cent on Liberum figures. Its online operation has proved such a success it's been opened up to third parties: the Label wing. And there's still plenty to go for in the core UK business: Next has only a 6 per cent share of the women's clothing market and 9 per cent of men's.

On top of that, though, Wolfson has bolted four "opportunities", spelt out in results, he says, for "internal purposes" and so "investors can see how they fit in". First, taking equity stakes in retailers it thinks it can improve, including buying Joules, Made.com and Cath Kidston out of administration. Second, creating the Total Platform operation, offering a website and Next's expanding distribution clout to other retailers, so far notably ones in which it has equity: Reiss, JoJo Maman Bébé and Made. Third, developing new brands and third-party licences. Fourth, expanding the Next brand overseas.

As Wolfson admits, it's early days and some ventures might not come off. But he's encouraged that equity stakes in about ten retailers chipped in £16.8 million profits last year. Shore Capital analysts doubt that the tech and infrastructure investment behind such plans "will deliver growth for shareholders". But Wolfson has delivered so far: 14.1 per cent compound annual earnings-per-share growth, assuming reinvested dividends, over 20 years. You wouldn't bet against his Next step ramping things up again.

Ermotti rides again

Boomerang bosses aren't always as successful as Apple's Steve Jobs. It's too early to tell whether Disney's Bob Iger will be a five-star comeback; Starbucks' Howard Schultz has just done his third stint at the coffee shop. And, on a smaller scale, Superdry's Julian Dunkerton has so far taken four fifths off the share price since his delightful boardroom coup in 2019.

Still, few comebacks have had as much riding on them as that of Sergio Ermotti, the returning UBS boss. As things turned out, the old one, Dutch national Ralph Hamers, just wasn't Swiss enough for the task ahead: smashing together the bank with its cuckoo compatriot Credit Suisse. As UBS put it, Hamers "agreed to step down to serve the interests of the combination, the Swiss financial sector and the country". Anyone would think the Swiss government was in charge.

True, Ermotti does look the "better horse", to quote UBS chairman Colm Kelleher. It was Ermotti, soon to be stepping down as chairman of reinsurer Swiss Re, who took charge last time round after rogue trader Kweku Adoboli cost UBS $2 billion. He brought a hatchet to the investment bank, instigated some post-2008 financial crisis cultural change and put wealth management at UBS's core. A bigger repeat is on the cards, with the 2027 annual cost savings target of more than SwFr8 billion (£7.1 billion) indicating the pain to come. And Credit Suisse's investment bank, big on Greensill Capital and Archegos-style scandals, clearly needs some brutal "focus". UBS shares rose 4 per cent to SwFr18.40, showing confidence in Ermotti. He said the new job was "a call of duty". It may look like the video game, too, after his cost-cutting spree.

It's Sorrell time

At last an explanation for the protests in Israel: Sir Martin Sorrell is visiting. How do we know? Because the S4 Capital boss used his trip as an excuse to smuggle out the full-year results at 4.51pm, after the UK market closed (report, page 39). He had to attend a family bar mitzvah, apparently, so couldn't possibly be expected to get the figures out London-time, not even ones showing losses up from £56.7 million to £160 million. Was this an emergency bar mitzvah?

Companies issuing results New York-time for the convenience of the boss should not be encouraged. Still, last year, the pint-sized ad man's figures were repeatedly delayed by S4's auditors. Even this is an improvement of sorts.

alistair.osborne@thetimes.co.uk

Money market funds crackdown to avert shadow banking shocks

Ben Martin Banking Editor

The vast global money market funds industry faces stricter rules as part of a push by the Bank of England to limit risks to the financial system lurking in the shadow banking sector.

Regulators worldwide are worried that rising borrowing costs are exposing vulnerabilities in less transparent corners of the financial markets.

One area of concern is money market funds, which invest in short-term debt securities and are used by pension funds, local authorities and other institutions as a low-risk place to park cash. Global money market funds had $8.4 trillion in assets under management at the end of last year, according to a report this month by Fitch, the ratings agency.

The concept is that these vehicles offer daily liquidity so that investors can access their money quickly. However, the Bank's financial policy committee is worried that money market funds could be overwhelmed by withdrawal demands in times of market turmoil, forcing the vehicles into suspension.

The committee warned in its latest quarterly update that this would "restrict access to cash for a range of investors, including corporates and financial firms, at a time when cash might be most needed".

The Bank will start a consultation into money market fund regulation this year and said its expectation was that these vehicles "should be able to withstand severe but plausible levels of investor outflows without amplifying stress and increasing risks to financial stability".

Threadneedle Street's move to tighten oversight of money market funds follows its plan, set out yesterday, to toughen the rules on liability-driven investment funds.

Both types of fund are part of the shadow banking sector, which encompasses "non-bank financial institutions" from hedge funds to pension schemes and is more opaque than the traditional banking industry.

LDI vehicles were thrown into turmoil last autumn by the gilt market sell-off sparked by the adverse reaction to September's mini-budget.

The Bank said in December that it would conduct a stress test of the broader financial system to identify risks posed by shadow banks and yesterday it set out more details of this exercise.

It said that the "exploratory scenario" would "investigate the behaviours of banks and non-bank financial institutions following a severe but plausible stress to financial markets".

Hunt: we must not forget the lessons of our financial crisis

Mehreen Khan Economics Editor

The government will not reverse post-financial crisis banking regulation, Jeremy Hunt has said, amid growing concerns that Britain is loosening post-Brexit rules for the City.

The chancellor told the Commons' Treasury select committee that a decision on whether to relax the ring-fencing between banks' retail divisions and their riskier investment banking businesses would be made with the aim of preserving financial stability.

"We think that 15 years after the financial crisis, it is the right time to review the ring-fencing regime. But we are also clear we will not unlearn the lessons of the financial crisis and we will make sure we build on the fact that our regulators have a responsibility to promote financial stability," Hunt said.

Ring-fencing was implemented in 2019 and requires large banks to hold cash reserves to protect their retail customers from shocks or losses emerging in riskier parts of the firms' activities, such as investment banking.

Sir John Vickers, who helped to devise the rules after the financial crisis, has warned the government not to loosen regulation at a time when global bank stocks have fallen in the wake of the collapses of three American lenders and the forced sale of Credit Suisse.

The government has asked for more evidence on whether rules to wind down a bank in the event of a collapse were strong enough to replace the ring-fencing regime. The suggestion was made by Sir Keith Skeoch, who carried out a two-year review for the Treasury.

The chancellor said that an evaluation of the evidence would conclude shortly, with a final decision likely this summer. Changes to the rules are part of the government's "Edinburgh reforms" to forge a more competitive financial services sector after Brexit.

"We will bring our plans forward shortly, but the reassurance I want to give everyone is that we will not unlearn lessons from the financial crisis and turn the clock back," Hunt said.

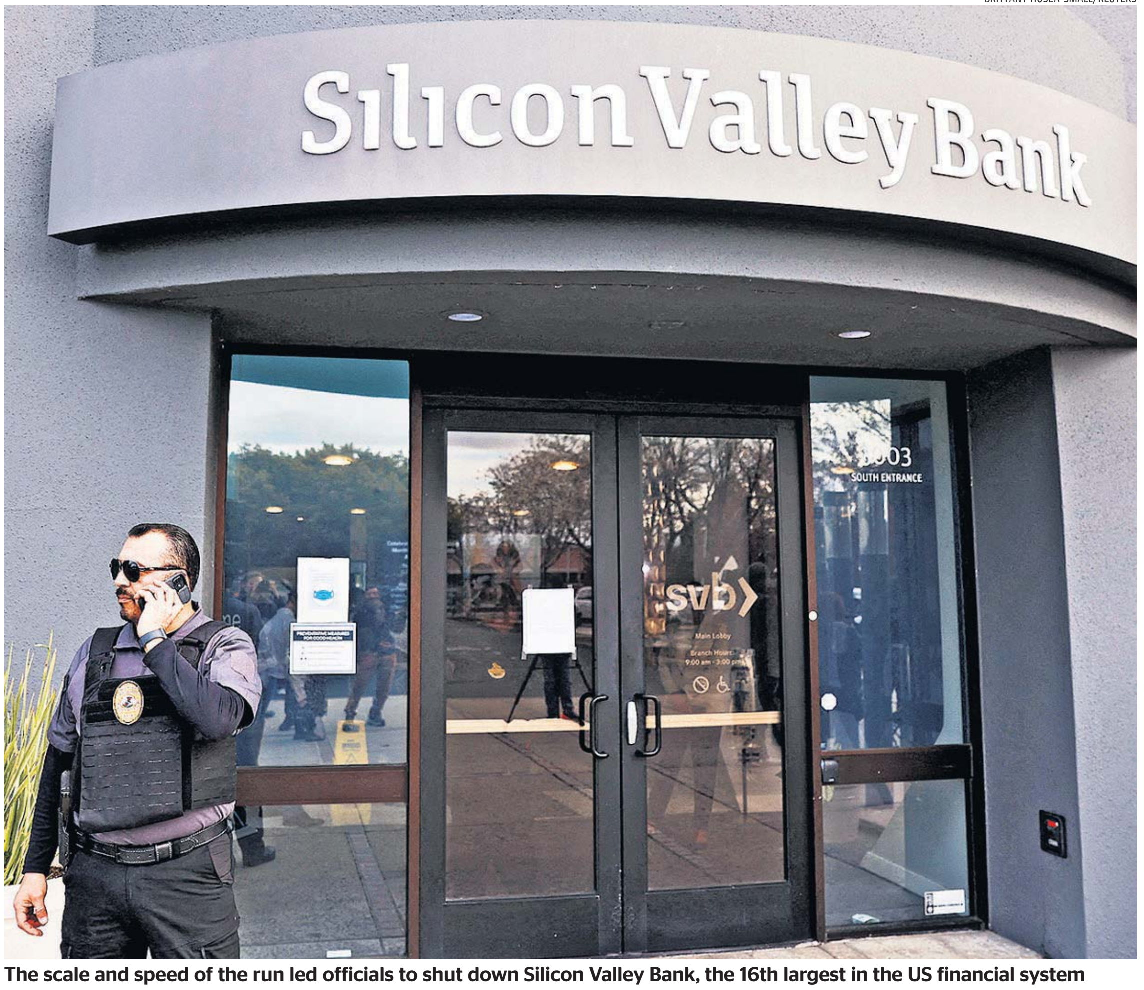
Sam Woods, deputy governor at the Bank of England and head of the Prudential Regulation Authority, warned this week against changes that would fundamentally weaken the regime. He told MPs that so-called resolution rules to wind down banks were not a substitute for ring-fencing but were part of a package of post-crisis regulation designed to limit costs to the taxpayer for bank failure.

"With all of these experiences — Silicon Valley Bank and Credit Suisse — it's been very clear to me that you would not want to rely on any one tool. You need to have various things, ring-fencing, bail-in and private sector purchases, to go into [a bank resolution]."

Andrew Bailey, governor of the Bank and a former head of the PRA, also warned that ring-fencing and bank failure rules "were complements, not alternatives".

Global regulators have been reluctant in recent weeks to use tougher bank resolution regimes to wind down crisis-hit lenders. Swiss authorities opted to push through a forced sale of Credit Suisse to UBS; US authorities provided a blanket guarantee of all deposits before winding down three banks; and Silicon Valley Bank UK was rescued by a £1 purchase by HSBC.

BRITTANY HOSEA-SMALL/REUTERS



The scale and speed of the run led officials to shut down Silicon Valley Bank, the 16th largest in the US financial system

Fed 'caught off-guard' by SVB's collapse

Callum Jones
US Business Correspondent

The collapse of Silicon Valley Bank highlighted failures by executives and regulators, according to a senior official at the US Federal Reserve.

"I think that any time you have a bank failure like this, bank management clearly failed, supervisors failed and our regulatory system failed," Michael Barr, vice-chairman for supervision at the Fed, told Congress yesterday. "We're looking at all of that."

The authorities had been "caught incredibly off-guard" by the scale and speed of the bank run, which led officials to shut down Silicon Valley Bank this month, Barr told the House of Representatives' financial services committee.

During two days of testimony in Washington, he outlined plans for an overhaul of the rules and regulations governing the American banking sector. In the first, before the Senate banking committee, Barr said he anticipated "the need to strengthen capital and liquidity standards" for institutions with assets of more than $100 billion.

Since Silicon Valley Bank approached the brink, officials have been scrambling to reassure consumers and companies that the wider banking system is safe. The banking crisis that ensued triggered the failure of Signature Bank, another regional lender in the United States, and prompted a rout in the shares of Credit Suisse that set the stage for its sale to the rival UBS.

Customers at Silicon Valley Bank withdrew $42 billion in a day after growing alarmed when the lender suffered a $1.8 billion loss on the sale of a vast bond portfolio and launched an ill-fated attempt to raise funds and plug the hole in its balance sheet.

Barr told Congress on Tuesday that he had first become aware of Silicon Valley Bank's stress on the afternoon of March 9, the day before its failure, but that executives at the lender had informed its supervisors that deposits were stable.

Resilient British banks 'not at risk' from woes elsewhere in the world

Ben Martin

British lenders are resilient in the face of the turmoil gripping the wider banking sector and are not at risk of "material" losses from this month's collapse of Silicon Valley Bank and the rescue takeover of Credit Suisse, the Bank of England has said.

In the first update from the Bank's financial policy committee since Silicon Valley Bank and Credit Suisse ran into trouble, regulators at Threadneedle Street insisted that the UK's banking system was "well-capitalised".

The woes at the California-based Silicon Valley Bank were caused by losses it had suffered on its bond investments. Its implosion raised concerns that Credit Suisse, weakened by years of scandals, could be vulnerable to wider stresses in the financial system, forcing Swiss authorities to orchestrate a sale of the Zurich-based bank to UBS, its rival, to allay market fears.

The Bank said its Prudential Regulation Authority had assessed the ability of all British lenders to withstand higher rates "including their need to hold capital against interest rate risks on banking book assets, including any net open bond positions, regardless of whether they are held at cost or fair value". The country's banks had "large liquid asset buffers" and were "not exposed to material direct losses" from Silicon Valley Bank and Credit Suisse.

British lenders had "very limited direct exposure to regional US banks", Threadneedle Street added, responding to concerns about several other small American banks. As a result, the committee decided to leave unchanged its requirement that banks build up a 2 per cent "rainy day" capital cushion by July.

The Bank also published the conclusions from last year's stress test on financial firms' ability to withstand a serious cyberattack. It was an exploratory exercise, rather than a pass or fail assessment, that it said had "highlighted the importance of firms planning, preparing and testing" for cyber-disruption.

Simon Nixon

Growth has to be built on firmer plans for infrastructure spending



Jeremy Hunt's budget this month was generally well received, at least by business. But there was a hole at the heart of it. The chancellor identified and took steps to address the key immediate challenges facing the economy: a lack of business investment that is holding back growth and future productivity and a worker shortage that fuels inflationary pressures.

What was missing was action to address the most pressing long-term challenge: the dire state of Britain's infrastructure and the urgent need to upgrade it to support growth and prepare the economy to meet new challenges, including climate change and the clean energy transition.

Three reports this week should give Hunt pause for thought. The first was from the National Infrastructure Commission, which warned that after slow progress in 2021 on projects from transport to energy to water, progress last year "stuttered further just as the need for acceleration has heightened". It highlighted decarbonising homes, with only 55,000 heat pumps installed last year against a government target of 600,000, and a similar failure in the rollout of electric vehicle charging stations.

Then yesterday the climate change committee issued a report warning that there had been a "lost decade in preparing for and adapting to the known risks that we face". It said the government's national adaptation programme failed to match the scale of the challenge facing the country. It has identified forty-five areas where action is needed to upgrade infrastructure, but only in five does the government have "fully credible" plans in place and in none are changes being delivered at a pace necessary to manage the risks appropriately.



Baroness Brown has sounded a warning

According to Baroness Brown of Cambridge, chairwoman of the CCC's adaptation committee, "each month that passes without action locks in more damaging impacts".

The Resolution Foundation is also sounding the alarm on the dire record of public investment. "Britain is a low investment nation," the think tank says in a report today. "Worse, it has now been one for decades."

Public investment has averaged 2.5 per cent of GDP so far this century. The average in other advanced economies is 3.7 per cent, nearly 50 per cent higher. Britain has been in the weakest third of Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries for public investment in 14 of the past 19 years. Had it matched the OECD average, it would have invested £500 billion more, at 2022 prices.

This failure to invest adequately in the fabric of the country has economic consequences. Since the global financial crisis of 2007-08, Britain's economy has grown by an average of 1 per cent, compared with 2.5 per cent in previous decades, while productivity has fallen further behind France, Germany and America. That partly reflects low investment. The Resolution Foundation notes that Britons spend more time commuting, for example, than those in all but two of the countries in the OECD. The country's hospitals have fewer beds than all but one OECD country. Its stock of affordable homes has fallen by about 40 per cent since the 1980s.

Britain risks falling further behind in future unless bold action is taken. After the Biden administration's Inflation Reduction Act, which provides subsidies for clean energy investment, the European Union has finalised its own Net Zero Industry Act. Hunt has said Britain will not be setting out its response until the autumn. True, he did announce £20 billion of funding in the budget for investment in carbon capture and storage, a technology that may have an important role to play in decarbonising energy, though details remain patchy. The danger is that Britain will not only fail to meet its net-zero targets but will lose competitiveness internationally.

Today's government "green day", rebadged as "energy security day" will provide some more answers, but initial leaks and briefings suggest it will be as much about extending lifelines to the fossil fuel industries as accelerating the decarbonisation of the economy and the introduction of new technologies. Announcements accelerating the installation of heat pumps and investment in hydrogen will be welcome. As the National Infrastructure Commission notes, it is time for the government to make big strategic bets on new technologies rather than focusing on pilot projects.

It will take more than a day of energy policy announcements to address the deficiencies in Britain's infrastructure. At the heart of the problem lies the way in which public investment is treated by the Treasury as the first lever to be pulled by chancellors looking to cut spending, as it has been by this government. After the 2019 election, public investment was due to rise to the highest level since the 1970s, but in the aftermath of Liz Truss's September mini-budget, spending was frozen in cash terms from 2025-06. That is a £15 billion real terms cut by 2027-08 and undoes 80 per cent of the increase that had been planned only two years earlier, the Resolution Foundation says.

What is needed is an infrastructure strategy that is not prey to short-term swings in the public finances or the need to hit arbitrary debt targets. It is no coincidence that the most successful recent examples of infrastructure investment, offshore wind and the rollout of gigabit broadband, are sectors where the government established a clear, long-term regulatory framework and subsidy regime. In contrast, the endless stop-start approach to many infrastructure projects, not least HS2, leads to investor uncertainty and spiralling costs. One result is that, ridiculously, governments have on average failed to spend £1 in every £6 in planned investment spending over the past seven spending reviews.

Both the Tories and Labour say that boosting lacklustre growth is one of their top priorities. Without a plan to tackle Britain's crumbling infrastructure, it is hard to take them seriously.

Ryan Bourne

It is time to loosen the noose that planning puts on building new homes

This week's investigation by BBC's *Panorama* into the housing market was pretty harrowing. One woman discovered that her Lewisham council house, bought for a mere £15,000 in 1984, had since been converted into six claustrophobic bedsits. Another couple faced financial ruin from a £27,000 bill for mandated improvements to the council tower block housing their owner-occupied flat. Collapsed ceilings, abhorrent mould and intolerable dampness were all seen across properties of various forms of tenure.

This exposé of one London estate's deplorable conditions should jolt MPs out of their housing policy stupor, but I fear the BBC's angle might ignite misdirected anger and pave the way for further misguided policies. The trite narrative of the programme blamed Margaret Thatcher's council house sales and housing associations' management of social properties for turning a once-decent, affordable council housing sector into a chaotic market swarming with slum landlords. Dodgy landlords and poorly managed housing associations deserve exposure, but this potted history glosses over the grim reality of many old council estates and the documentary's own evidence of dilapidated council homes today.

It also ignores the obvious: in a market economy, landlords should scramble to lure tenants by enhancing amenities and offering competitive rents. The fact that they do not indicates the documentary's glaring omission — we simply haven't built enough homes over decades across all tenures.

The evidence is everywhere. If the squalor doesn't sway you, consider that median house prices now tower over eight times median earnings. Or how about that vacancy rates languish below 1 per cent, private rental floor space per person has dwindled and land values sometimes rocket by 100 times when planning permission is secured for farmland.

Market signals are practically screaming that people desire more homes. Sure, higher incomes and increased immigration help to push that demand, but other sectors show this needn't result in spiralling prices or sustained subpar quality.

So what's to blame? *Panorama* alluded to the decline in social housebuilding after Thatcher's right-to-buy, implying that the private sector was incapable of providing sufficient and adequate housing. Others contend that the planning system itself throttles building. A recent Centre for Cities report, using United Nations data, adjudicates the theories and concludes that our problems long predate Thatcher's council house sell-off.

Housebuilding fell immediately after the Town and Country Planning Act of 1947 had introduced an unpredictable, case-by-case decision-making process. We never again reached the heights of the Victorian era, or even of the 1930s. Consequently, our housing stock per person had already slipped from 5.5 per cent above the European average in 1955 to 2 per cent below by 1979 (before right-to-buy and "mass immigration"), plummeting to 8 per cent below by 2015.

Council house building rates were already falling through the 1970s, too. But the critical fact is this: postwar Britain had the lowest postwar rate of private building in western Europe. Had we matched western Europe's overall performance, there would have been 4.3 million more homes by 2015.

Ant Breach, the report's author, concludes: "The root cause of the housing crisis is the decline in the supply of land for new homes, not the decline in subsidy." The postwar planning system and expanding green belts severely rationed land available for development. Planning was like a noose, gradually tightening the development of all housing forms as the economy grew.

We now face the consequences. Too many fork out exorbitant rents for cramped or crumbling homes, as few alternatives exist. Politicians then "do something", reacting to hardship by calling for tighter regulations on landlords (further squeezing supply) or outright government housing provision (should high food prices prompt the state to build farms?) Taken in good faith, their response mistakes the symptoms for the disease — and so demands ill-conceived treatments.

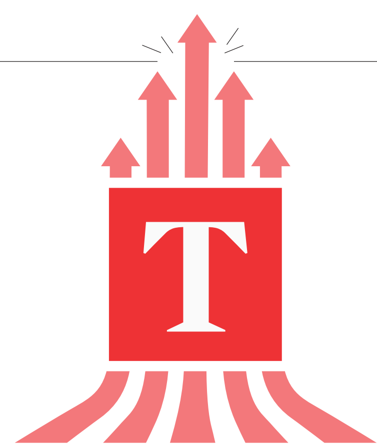
Ryan Bourne is R Evan Scharf chair for the Public Understanding of Economics at the Cato Institute and author of the recent book Economics in One Virus

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UBS brings in ex-boss to help 'urgent' merger issues

Martin Strydom, Patrick Hosking

UBS has ditched its chief executive and is bringing back a former boss in a surprise management switch nine days after agreeing to the rescue purchase of Credit Suisse.

Sergio Ermotti, chairman of Swiss Re, the insurer, will replace Ralph Hamers as chief executive from April 5, the Swiss bank said.

Hamers, 56, who succeeded Ermotti, "has agreed to step down to serve the interests of the new combination, the Swiss financial sector and the country", UBS said.

The bank's board said "it took the decision in light of the new challenges and priorities facing UBS after the announcement of the acquisition".

Ermotti, 62, who is Swiss, was chief executive of UBS from 2011 to 2020. The bank said that during his tenure he had repositioned the bank after the 2008 financial crisis, building strength by putting its leading global wealth and asset management business at its core, shrinking the investment bank and achieving "a profound culture change within the bank".

Colm Kelleher, chairman of UBS, emphasised the huge size and significance of the merger, which was the "biggest single financial transaction since 2008". It was also the first merger of two of the thirty banks worldwide categorised as systemically important by regulators.

"It is in the opinion of the board that, for this massive integration exercise, Sergio would be the better pilot of this next voyage of UBS," Kelleher said.

Ermotti's Swiss nationality also gave him an edge "at the margin", Kelleher said. Hamers is Dutch. The rescue deal, engineered by Swiss regulators and politicians, is viewed as politically sensitive.

Ermotti will take over officially from Wednesday and Hamers will remain at the bank, working as an adviser during the transition period. Ermotti will continue to chair Swiss Re until after its annual meeting on April 12 to ensure an orderly transition there.

Ermotti struck a guarded tone yesterday, asking for "a little bit of patience [over a] couple of months" to allow the bank to forge a plan. "The task at hand is an urgent and challenging one," he said. "In order to do it in a sustainable and successful way and in the interest of all stakeholders involved, we need to thoughtfully and systematically assess all options."

Hamers, who has run UBS for two and a half years, said: "I am, of course, sorry to leave UBS, but circumstances have changed in ways that none of us expected.

"I am stepping aside in the interests of the new combined entity and its stakeholders, including Switzerland and its financial sector. It has been a pleasure and privilege to lead this great bank to where it is today."

UBS is based in Zurich and Basel. Credit Suisse, its great national rival, has its headquarters in Zurich. Both have operations in London. The combined banks will have $1.6 trillion in assets, more than 120,000 staff worldwide — and a complex balance sheet.

USB acquired Credit Suisse for a knockdown price of SwF3 billion (£2.65 billion) in an emergency deal pushed through by the country's authorities on Monday last week. It came after a weekend of talks involving regulators around the world, including officials at the Bank of England and from the United States.

The deal partly calmed banking market jitters triggered by the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank, America's 16th largest lender.

Credit Suisse, which employed 50,000 staff, has faced scandals, mishaps and concerns about its financial health over the past three years. Last month it recorded its heaviest annual loss since the financial crisis and warned investors of further pain to come.

Shares in UBS rose by 66 centimes, or 3.7 per cent, to SwFr18.40 yesterday.



UBS is based in Zurich, above, and Basel — and Sergio Ermotti's Swiss nationality gave him an edge, the chairman of bank said

Credit Suisse 'broke promises on US tax evasion'

Callum Jones
US Business Correspondent

Credit Suisse breached a criminal plea agreement by continuing to help ultra-wealthy Americans to hide assets from tax authorities, a US Senate report has alleged.

The Senate finance committee said it had identified "major violations" of the 2014 agreement, including what it said may be a continuing criminal tax conspiracy involving nearly $100 million in secret offshore accounts belonging to a family of dual US-Latin American citizens.

The report's conclusions are likely to increase scrutiny on Credit Suisse, which is being sold to UBS, its main Swiss rival, after fears over its financial health fuelled a rout in the banking group's shares. The rescue deal is expected to be completed next month.

During an investigation, the committee had "uncovered almost two dozen additional large, potentially undeclared accounts held by Credit Suisse belonging to ultra-high-net-worth US persons", it said. The bank disclosed to the committee last year "in connection with its co-operation with [the US Department of Justice] it had identified ten additional large client relationships involving US persons, with each client holding accounts in excess of $20 million", the report said.

"Days prior to the release of this report, Credit Suisse also disclosed that a review in response to the committee's investigation identified another 13 large accounts in excess of $20 million that may be held by US persons."

The committee described it as "deeply concerning that almost nine years after executives testified before Congress that the bank would clean up its act, Credit Suisse is still disclosing hundreds of millions of dollars in secret offshore accounts belonging to wealthy US taxpayers".

In May 2014 Credit Suisse pleaded guilty to a US criminal charge and agreed to pay a $2.5 billion fine to authorities for helping Americans to evade taxes.

In a statement, the banking group said it did not tolerate tax evasion and that it had been working with American authorities.

"Credit Suisse's new leadership team has co-operated with the committee's inquiry and has supported the work of [the Senate finance committee chairman] Senator [Ron] Wyden, including in respect of suggested policy solutions to help strengthen the financial industry's ability to detect undisclosed US persons," it said.

In a statement, Wyden said: "At the centre of this investigation are greedy Swiss bankers and catnapping government regulators, and the result appears to be a massive, ongoing conspiracy to help ultra-wealthy US citizens to evade taxes and rip off their fellow Americans.

"Credit Suisse got a discount on the penalty it faced in 2014 for enabling tax evasion because bank executives swore up and down they'd get out of the business of defrauding the United States."

The US Department for Justice did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

'At the centre of this investigation are greedy Swiss bankers and catnapping regulators'

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ROSS HELEN/GETTY IMAGES

Board bets on former chief as 'better horse'

Profile

When Sergio Ermotti was appointed to the top job at UBS in 2011 to mop up after a £1.4 billion rogue trader scandal, the bank's shares were changing hands for about SwFr11 (Patrick Hosking writes).

Nine years later, when he left, they were still bobbing around SwFr11. Ralph Hamers, his successor, did rather better, pushing the shares up by 70 per cent in two and a half years. Yet when it came to the choice of who to head the bank and execute the tricky job of absorbing accident-prone Credit Suisse, the UBS board preferred Ermotti, 62, right. Colm Kelleher, the UBS chairman, said he was the "better horse".



In his previous spell at UBS, Ermotti gained a solid reputation after scaling back the investment banking division, betting big on wealth management and beefing up compliance in an attempt to prevent future scandals. On his watch, UBS had to pay fine after fine over failings ranging from interest rate rigging to tax evasion.

He became "a key figure in UBS's recovery from the great financial crisis", Russ Mould, at AJ Bell, said. Analysts at Jefferies said he had a sufficiently strong record to tackle the "challenging" task of restructuring and integrating Credit Suisse.

"He's the right person for the job at this time," Beat Wittmann, chairman of Porta Advisors, a Swiss boutique advisory firm, said, "but the realities will soon kick in. He'll need to decide quickly what to keep and what to sell, and when. It will be hard to stay friends with everyone."

Born in the Italian-speaking Swiss canton of Ticino, Ermotti left school at 15 with a dream of becoming a pro footballer, but joined a local bank and never looked back. He bought his first bond when still a teenager and made his first loss in silver. He later took a management course at Oxford University.

After a brief spell at Citigroup, he joined Merrill Lynch in Zurich and stayed for 16 years. He joined UniCredit, the Italian bank, rising to deputy chief executive — but after missing out on the top job there, he left for UBS.

Ermotti is married with two children. His favourite films are *The Sting* and *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest*.

The boomerang bosses

No man ever steps in the same river twice, Heraclitus said, for it is not the same river and he is not the same man. Thousands of years later, mankind is still trying to prove the philosopher wrong (Robert Lea writes).

Sergio Ermotti's return to pick up the threads at UBS is the latest example of what appears to be something of a fashion. Bob Iger, 72, right, is back running Disney after a brief hiatus and following a 15-year



stint at the head of the House of Mouse, returning to the group last year in the hope of reviving its fortunes.

Such comeback appointments usually are one of three things: an indication of a staggering lack of originality, a strategic masterstroke, or pragmatism in the category of the least worst option.

Steve Jobs, right, was the ultimate boomerang boss at Apple, turning the technology company from near-collapse to one of the largest and most influential businesses in the world. Travis Kalanick, the former chief executive of Uber, has coined the term "Steve Jobs-ing it" to describe the return of a former boss.



Howard Schultz, 69, held the chief executive role at Starbucks three times, leading to concerns that the coffee chain may struggle to recruit permanent leaders for fear of the spectre of the charismatic businessman stealing their thunder.



In 2015, Twitter hoped Jack Dorsey, 46, left, its former boss and co-founder, could rescue the company from its troubles. His second spell ended in 2021, but even he would not call his return a triumph. In a message on the day Elon Musk laid off half of Twitter's staff, Dorsey wrote: "I realise many are angry with me. I own the responsibility for why everyone is in this situation: I grew the company size too quickly. I apologise for that."

Comeback kids can be linked with unmitigated disasters, too: Kenneth Lay returned as chief executive of Enron, the infamous energy trader, six months after his 2001 departure — and went on to oversee its bankruptcy filing and spectacular collapse.

Sorrell's S4 exceeds £1bn in revenue for the first time

Alex Ralph

The digital advertising company founded by Sir Martin Sorrell has generated annual revenue above £1 billion for the first time.

S4 Capital, which is seeking to rebuild investor confidence after an accounting saga delayed its previous 2021 annual results, published its latest full-year results yesterday — after the market closed in London because of Sorrell's overseas travel to Israel.

The 2022 results showed like-for-like revenue rose by 24.3 per cent to almost £1.1 billion in the year to the end of December, generating an operating profit of £124.2 million, down 16.4 per cent on the same basis.

S4 said the decline reflected "investment in hiring in the first half ahead of net revenue growth, partly offset by the benefit from increased focus on people investment and cost management in the second half".

The group is focused on digital, the fastest-growing part of the advertising market, and has grown quickly through a large number of mergers. It was built on the €300 million acquisition of Media.Monks, an Amsterdam-based agency that makes digital campaigns, in 2018, and the $150 million purchase the same year of MightyHive, which buys online advertising for clients.

S4 delayed releasing annual results last May, which it had blamed on control weaknesses, staff turnover and a lack of detailed documentation. It said yesterday that "major progress has been made in improving financial controls, treasury, risk and governance".

Sorrell, 78, said: "We have momentum going into 2023 and are cautiously optimistic, despite the slowdown of growth in our major addressable markets."

Shares in S4 Capital closed broadly flat at 173½p, leaving them down 8 per cent this year and valuing the company at about £996 million.

Mortgage approvals 'are past the worst'

Arthi Nachiappan
Economics Correspondent

Mortgage approvals have risen for the first time since August in a sign that the "worst may be in the past", Bank of England figures show.

The number of mortgages approved for house purchases beat economists' expectations to reach 43,500 in February, up from 39,600 in January.

However, the level of mortgage borrowing remained about 35 per cent lower than pre-pandemic levels as the rising cost of borrowing and the cost of living crisis forced consumers to be cautious. Despite the rise in approvals, overall mortgage lending fell from £2 billion in January to £700 million last month, which, outside of the pandemic period, is the lowest level of net borrowing since April 2016.

A tenth interest rate rise in just over a year to 4 per cent in February also pushed up the effective interest rate, the actual rate of interest paid, on newly drawn mortgages to 4.24 per cent, up by 0.36 percentage points compared with the start of the year. Interest rates have since risen further to 4.25 per cent as the Bank tackles double-digit inflation.

Martin Beck, chief economic adviser to the EY Item Club, the forecasting body, said: "The latest household lending data indicated continued weakness in housing market activity, albeit with signs that the worst may be in the past."

The latest figures reflect the period before the global financial volatility caused by the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank and the run-up to UBS's takeover of Credit Suisse.

"The unknown is the extent to which banks respond to that volatility by tightening lending standards," Beck said. "The optimistic view is that the capital and liquidity strength of UK banks mean … lending to households can carry on as before. But in the pessimistic case, should lending standards tighten, it could mean further weakness in the housing market and a reduction in consumers' ability to use debt to compensate for falling real incomes."

Samuel Tombs, chief UK economist at Pantheon Macroeconomics, said the economy was being supported by people using "excess" savings built up during the pandemic, but these households would seek to rebuild the buffer when their incomes recovered.

House prices held up better than many experts had expected, with the latest data suggesting that, after wobbling at the end of last year, they have stabilised in 2023. The average price of a home in the UK was £285,476 in February, according to Halifax's house price index — 2.1 per cent higher than this time last year. The annual rate of house price inflation has held steady for three months in a row.

Net lending for commercial property turned negative in February, falling to minus £288 million, as investors held back amid concerns about falling capital values.

Matthew Pointon, senior property economist at the Capital Economics consultancy, said: "With the ratio of UK bank commercial property debt-to-capital values still low by past standards, the risk of commercial property triggering a banking crisis here is low."

Tide of troubles keeps on rising

Ofwat says it is turning up the pressure, but not everybody believes the regulator will succeed, reports **Robert Lea**

Clean it up
WATER CAMPAIGN

The water industry's to-do list is as daunting as it is long: fix lingering leaks; stem foul flooding from overflowing sewers; address poor customer service; cope with recurrent droughts. Then there is the sector's whopping £60 billion debt. And now, after years of criticism over poor performance, it seems the industry regulator is finally getting tough. But how effective will Ofwat's new measures be as inflation ratchets up the financial pressure?



This month it told the ten regional monopolies that it was changing their operating licences and would intervene in their payment of dividends to shareholders if it did not think they were sufficiently financially resilient.

Its chief executive was robust. "When deciding on dividend payments to investors, water companies need to take stock of their performance for customers, the environment and the company's overall financial health," David Black said. "Too often, this has not been the case.

"We hope the introduction of these new powers will focus minds around company board tables on the importance of responsible decision-making and openness with customers and other stakeholders. If that isn't the case, we will act."

On the face of it, it appeared Ofwat — for so long criticised for having been gamed by the privatised water companies and their (often overseas) shareholders, seen as using the businesses as a dividend cash machine — was getting serious. When it first floated such a move last summer, the companies, through Water UK, their trade association, called it an "unprecedented step" for any British regulator. Water UK indicated that if Ofwat were to take such a step, it would have to be pretty sure of its ground.

Privately, some water companies indicated that if the regulator was going to try to block shareholder payments, then the matter would surely end up in the hands of lawyers. Water UK says it is looking at the detail of Ofwat's licence changes.

Others are less moved by the intervention. Feargal Sharkey, below, formerly in the Undertones and later a solo recording artist, has become a touchstone for a public fed up with the water industry. He has been environmentally politicised by his passion for flyfishing after it became apparent that he was increasingly likely to snag the wrong kind of brown trout.

A supporter of this newspaper's Clean It Up campaign, Sharkey, 64, saw in the pronouncements by Ofwat not a regulator finally prepared to do battle but another set of emperor's new clothes. "There is nothing new here at all," he said, citing provisions of section 172 of the 2006 Companies Act, which determines that directors have a legal duty to maintain the financial health of their company, as well as Ofwat's existing regulations that state dividends declared or paid must not impair the ability of the company to finance the regulated water and sewerage business.

"Ofwat knows all of this," Sharkey said. "The question actually becomes why on earth is Ofwat taking a bunch of already existing policies, regulations and legal obligations, dressing them up and trying to present them as something new?"

Ofwat officials think that is harsh. The regulator argues it has tightened the conditions of the companies' licences, determining a trigger point at which it can intervene. Nevertheless, it concedes that the "enforcement action" it can take could fall short of actually being able to block the payment of dividends.

The licence amendments allow Ofwat to intervene when a company's credit rating is only one rung above "junk bond" status, or sub-investment grade — a level at which borrowings can become significantly more expensive to service. Previously, Ofwat's power of "cash lock-up" existed at the credit rating rung above that.

"We felt this was too low a rating for a company providing an essential service to fall to before they are restricted from paying dividends," Ofwat says in its new guidance. It will not come into legal force until 2025, it adds, to allow the water companies time to make required adjustments.

Meanwhile, much of the industry is already in financial crisis — and the pressures are rising.

Thames Water, the largest company in the sector, touching nearly a quarter of the nation's households, is also the country's most serial offender when not doing right by its customers and the environment. Its financial resilience in the face of needing to spend heavily to curb its poorest of records on leakage means Thames has not paid a dividend to its shareholders for five years. Moody's, the ratings agency, says Thames is at "acute risk" of becoming "subject to a distribution block".

Southern Water pledged during the pandemic that it would "not pay any dividends until it is clear that to do so would not be detrimental to the company's financial resilience". Months after that announcement, it came within days of being put into special administration by Ofwat before a £1 billion financial rescue by Macquarie, the Australian finance house.

Research by Jefferies, the broker, says Southern is worst placed under the new regime as its credit rating is just above junk and because it holds only a one-star rating (out of five) in its environmental performance assessment as a serial polluter, from oysterfields off the north Kent coast to the sailing playgrounds of The Solent.

Last autumn Yorkshire Water, which is on an official Ofwat watchlist alongside Northumbrian, Anglian, Wessex and South West Water (owned by Pennon, the quoted company), was forced to engineer a £940 million injection from investors.

Jefferies believes all of those named



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for water monopolies

CHRIS J. RATCLIFFE/BLOOMBERG VIA GETTY IMAGES



above could come under Ofwat's scrutiny. "Companies under investigation would need to explain how they accounted for ongoing investigations in deciding a dividend payout and a more cautious dividend would be expected in such circumstances," it said.

Last week United Utilities admitted that inflation staying higher for longer was playing havoc with its debt-funded business model. Of the company's £7.8 billion of net borrowings, £4.5 billion is index-linked. It has said previously that every 1 per cent rise in the rate of inflation puts another £43 million on its debt servicing bill.

With inflation still above 10 per cent, the company is now saying that its annual bill for interest payments will rise by 57 per cent, or £175 million, to about £480 million. That compares with £132 million in 2020-21. The FTSE 100 company, which serves the northwest of England, also admitted that having to pay so much interest was not helping its level of debt and that its net borrowings would have risen further when the end of year tally comes in.

For Sharkey, the latest threats by Ofwat to sort out what he described as the "legitimised rip-off" of the water industry is "the last gasp of a failed regulator".

Renationalisation, as put forward by the former leadership of the Labour Party and even supported by some Conservatives, would be a fool's errand, with £60 billion of borrowing sitting on the water companies' balance sheets and the risk of billions of pounds in compensation that equity investors would demand through the courts.

Sharkey fears that consumers will be forced to bear the brunt of regulatory failure as the companies demand more in bills to secure the water supply and prevent pollution — money that Ofwat, as the economic regulator, says has already been granted them in their five yearly settlements determining the levels of household charges.

"Are we really going to ask the consumer to pay a second time to prevent sewage spills and secure supply?" Sharkey asked. "The dual system of regulation of the water industry by the Environment Agency and Ofwat has failed to protect either the environment or the consumer. There really has to be political ambition to change that."

Farfetch deal gets green light from regulator

Alex Ralph

The competition watchdog has ruled out an in-depth investigation of Farfetch's deal to buy a stake in Yoox Net-a-Porter.

Richemont, the luxury goods group, agreed to sell its 47.5 per cent stake in the online fashion retailer last year in a deal that valued the business at about £880 million. The Competition and Markets Authority had said in January that it would consider whether the deal could lead to a "substantial lessening of competition" within the UK and had given interested parties until the middle of last month to submit comments.

€2.7bn
Richemont's expected writedown on the sale of its stake

In a brief update yesterday, the regulator said that it had cleared the transaction and planned to publish its findings. The deal remains subject to approval from regulators in other countries, however.

Farfetch, an online luxury fashion platform founded in 2007 and listed in New York, said: "We welcome the CMA's decision and continue to work with regulators in jurisdictions where approvals are required."

Richemont, the Swiss group behind Cartier, made significant investments in Yoox Net-a-Porter but sought a sale of its stake after the company made persistent losses. It said in August that it expected a €2.7 billion writedown related to the deal.

The sale came after it emerged that Third Point, an activist hedge fund, had taken a stake in Richemont to put pressure on its management.

Net-a-Porter, which was founded by Natalie Massenet in 2000, has failed to cash in on the surge in online shopping during the pandemic. It had been losing market share to Farfetch before the deal and had struggled to deliver on a turnaround of the business.

Richemont's sale of its stake also gave Farfetch the option to buy the remaining shares in the business and to pave the way for a full merger.

The long-awaited deal last year followed months of negotiations that were complicated by the ecommerce sector's drop from pandemic highs as consumers returned to physical stores.

It has also come amid a flurry of industry-wide investments in digital services as luxury companies overcome past scepticism and embrace new channels to reach customers. Analysts say that the deal makes sense for both sides.



Farfetch sells high-end clothing online; it welcomed the ruling

THE TIMES Enterprise Network

The latest news, inspiration and advice for business leaders on how to run and grow their companies as the UK economy recovers from the impact of the coronavirus.

Taking it badly
What can you do when a team member cries on getting critical feedback? Ann Francke, below, gives her expert advice.

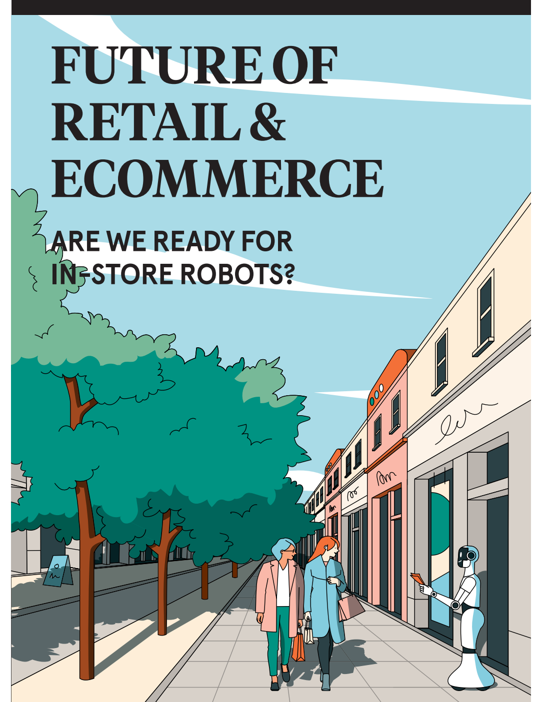


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FUTURE OF RETAIL & ECOMMERCE

ARE WE READY FOR IN-STORE ROBOTS?



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Emma Powell Tempus

Buy, sell or hold: today's best share tips



Few positives in a second-class stock

IDS

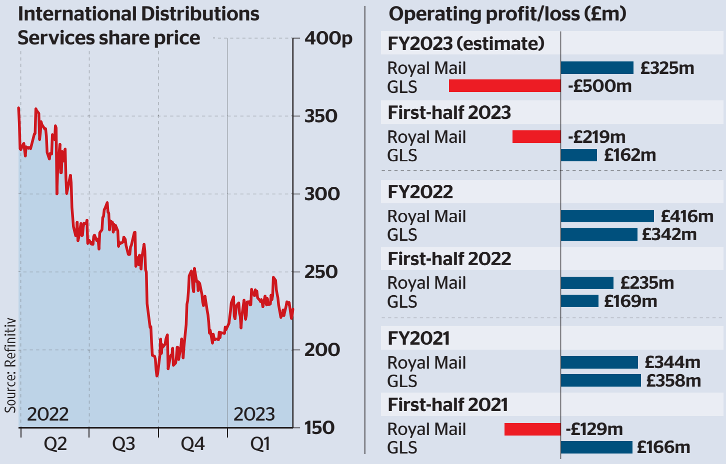
Market cap	Nine-month revenue
£2.12 billion	£9.1bn

Ask any one of the dwindling bulls on International Distributions Services what is the attraction of remaining invested in the beleaguered stock and they will point to GLS, the highly profitable international parcels delivery business.

The trouble with unlocking any of that value? Royal Mail, the problem child that represents about half of the FTSE 250 group's revenue and is in the middle of a lengthy and costly dispute with its workers. Now the Communication Workers Union is understood to have been told that a failure to reach an agreement risks tipping Royal Mail's lossmaking regulated delivery business in Britain into administration.

But Royal Mail isn't like most businesses. To put it into administration, for example, government approval would be required. The practicalities and time frame for when any separation could be achieved are opaque. Politically, an administration without International Distributions Services putting any more cash into Royal Mail could prove unpalatable, given that the group balance sheet is not in distress and GLS remains highly profitable. IDS declined to comment on the reports, save for the fact it was doing "all we can to get agreement" with the union.

Mail disorder



ADVICE Avoid
WHY Industrial action and the continuing decline in letters make it likely the stock will continue to disappoint

As JP Morgan Cazenove points out, debt covenants seem unlikely to be breached. At the half-year point IDS had cash and available debt facilities of £1.7 billion. Its £975 million loan facility has a condition of net debt not exceeding 3.5 times adjusted profits. Under the terms used for covenant testing, the group was in a £307 million net cash position at the end of March last year. On that same basis, the American broker reckons it will shift into a net debt position of £197 million at the end of this financial year, which would equate to a leverage multiple of 0.7.

That hardly makes losses any easier to swallow. Analysts have forecast a pre-tax loss of £279 million for this year, or an adjusted operating loss of £182 million. That reflects an anticipated loss of £500 million this year for Royal Mail, worse than the guidance of between £350 million and £450 million.

Trading guidance for Royal Mail inevitably is laden with caveats. True, there has not been industrial action during the fourth quarter of IDS's financial year, one condition of losses being held at the level suggested in January. But it does not include the cost of voluntary redundancies, which might be "significantly lower" than the 5,000 to 6,000 previously announced but still has not been accounted for. The threat of fresh strikes could obfuscate guidance for the next financial year.

What about GLS? Profit here is expected be €380 million to €400 million this year, but it is not immune from the economic pressures buffeting Royal Mail. Delivering parcels across borders is a growing market, but GLS has suffered an easing in demand since lockdowns ended. Delivery volumes declined by 2 per cent over the first nine months of the financial year, even if price rises helped to keep revenue in positive territory. Cost inflation is biting and the adjusted operating margin is expected to decline by one percentage point to 7.5 per cent. In the long term, GLS is operating in a highly competitive market, against operators without the cash drain of a legacy business.

The shares have fallen by more than a third over the past 12 months. In a sum-of-the-parts valuation, Liberum has put a £3.4 billion enterprise value on GLS. Based upon IDS's present market cap and debt, that estimate implies investors value Royal Mail at about £200 million. Even that could prove too generous.

ESSENTRA

Dividend yield	Latest pre-tax loss
3.6 per cent	£29.1 million

Shedding less profitable divisions doesn't mean Essentra is home and dry. True, the industrial manufacturer and distributor is left with a higher-margin components business and a cleaner balance sheet, but it still faces wider economic pressures that mean sales volumes are expected to be flat, at best, or, at worst, down 2 per cent on last year.

Lockdowns in China and customers running down stock levels in the United States have weighed on orders. Last year revenue growth was inflated by price inflation, which pumped up revenue by 9.5 per cent at a constant currency level, offsetting negative volumes. The question is this: if inflation eases this year as expected, to what extent can Essentra repeat the trick? Analysts at Numis expect more muted revenue growth of only 1 per cent this year.

Post-restructuring, the shares trade at 17 times forward earnings, a slight discount to industrial manufacturing groups with a better proven record, such as DiscoverIE or Diploma. The real test is whether the FTSE 250 group can deliver on a five-year plan to triple operating profit and pump up the margin to 18 per cent, from 12.7 per cent last year. It intends to do that by accelerating revenue growth to a compound rate of more than 10 per cent, from a historic rate of about 4 per cent. That's quite a jump.

Scott Fawcett, its boss, reckons more than 6 per cent of that will be organic, pinning some hopes on a new transaction management system helping Essentra to price better and operate more efficiently. Relatively fixed operating costs mean there is a degree of operating leverage within the business. The rest of the revenue growth is set to come from mergers and acquisitions. After shareholder returns of £150 million of proceeds from the sale of the packaging and cigarette filters businesses, leverage is due to stand at about 0.5 times adjusted profits, below a near-term target ceiling of one. Together with the £60 million in cash the remaining business typically churns out, that leaves enough room for more bolt-on deals.

Then again, there are also share price discounts on offer for better-quality industrial names.

ADVICE Hold
WHY Other industrial companies have proven more resilient to the macroeconomic pressures

NEWS IN BRIEF

Broadcom deal review

The Competition and Markets Authority has launched an investigation into Broadcom's $61 billion merger with VMware amid concerns that it could push up computer costs for banks and the government. The CMA warned that the tie-up could stifle innovation and may limit the supply of specialist hardware and software products. David Stewart, executive director at the watchdog, said the deal threatened infrastructure that "underpins services that public and private organisations rely on".

Car output in slow lane

The slow recovery in car production, which has fallen to 66-year lows, has continued with a 13 per cent rise in factory output in February. According to figures from the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders, British factories — mainly Nissan in Sunderland, the Jaguar Land Rover plants in the West Midlands and Merseyside, and Mini in Oxford — have produced 113,000 cars so far this year, up 6 per cent on the first two months of last year.

BAE boss's pay boost

The demand for weapons in Europe has boosted profits at BAE Systems and contributed to a big pay increase for its boss. Charles Woodburn, 52, chief executive of the arms, fighter jets and warships manufacturer, received a 50 per cent pay rise to £10.7 million last year, according to the FTSE 100 group's annual report and accounts. His pay was swollen by a more-than-doubling in his annual long-term bonus to £6.8 million. The shares closed down 1½p, or 0.2 per cent, at 986½p.

UK to join trade pact

The 11 members of a trans-Pacific trade pact, which includes Japan and Australia, are expected to soon reach broad agreement with Britain on it joining. The UK said talks with the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership had gone well. Britain has been looking to build trade ties after Brexit and began the talks in June 2021. Other members are Brunei, Canada, Chile, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam.

PRICES

Major indices

New York	
Dow Jones	32717.60 (+323.35)
Nasdaq Composite	11926.24 (+210.16)
S&P 500	4027.81 (+56.54)
Tokyo	
Nikkei 225	27883.78 (+365.53)
Hong Kong	
Hang Seng	20192.40 (+407.75)
Amsterdam	
AEX Index	745.54 (+11.73)
Sydney	
AO	7236.00 (+16.60)
Frankfurt	
DAX	15328.78 (+186.76)
Singapore	
Straits	3262.54 (+7.00)
Brussels	
BEL20	3744.81 (+77.65)
Paris	
CAC-40	7186.99 (+98.65)

Zurich	
SMI Index	10963.31 (+124.20)
DJ Euro Stoxx 50	4231.27 (+63.06)
London	
FTSE 100	7564.27 (+80.02)
FTSE 250	18632.81 (+236.12)
FTSE 350	4160.28 (+45.24)
FTSE Eurotop 100	3533.04 (+42.69)
FTSE All-Shares	4116.63 (+44.17)
FTSE Non Financials	4995.22 n/a
techMARK 100	6523.38 (+32.94)
Bargains	n/a
US$	1.2307 (-0.0022)
Euro	1.1355 (-0.0018)
£:SDR	0.98 (+0.00)
Exchange Index	78.95 (+0.11)
Bank of England official close (4pm)	
CPI	127.89 Feb (2015 = 100)
RPI	364.50 Feb (Jan 1987 = 100)
RPIX	290.10 Jun (Jan 1987 = 100)
Morningstar Long Commodity	677.16 (+5.72)
Morningstar Long/Short Commod	4703.45 (+27.75)

London Financial Futures

	Period	Open	High	Low	Sett	Vol	Open Int
Long Gilt	Mar 23	104.84	104.84	104.70	104.66	10	2874
	Jun 23	103.59	104.19	103.30	103.96	166069	379270
3-Mth Sterling	Jun 23						
	Sep 23						
	Dec 23						
	Mar 24						
	Jun 24						
3-Mth Euribor	Jun 23	96.595	96.650	96.575	96.630	142714	526391
	Sep 23	96.480	96.545	96.440	96.500	99062	513061
	Dec 23	96.585	96.660	96.545	96.595	83039	322992
	Mar 24	96.770	96.830	96.715	96.760	72902	304372
	Jun 24	96.900	96.985	96.855	96.910	91323	280432
3-Mth Euroswiss	Jun 23						
	Sep 23						
	Dec 23						
	Mar 24						
FTSE100	Jun 23	7484.5	7571.0	7467.5	7552.5	68581	603494
	Sep 23	7549.0	7549.0	7549.0	7554.5	2	595
FTSEurofirst 80	Jun 23				5707.0		
	Sep 23				5749.5		

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Commodities

ICIS pricing (London 7.30pm)

Crude Oils ($/barrel FOB)

Brent Physical	77.38	-0.74
BFOE(May)	78.34	-0.38
BFOE(Jun)	77.61	-0.61
WTI(May)	72.97	-0.23
WTI(Jun)	73.12	-0.22

Products ($/MT)

Spot CIF NW Europe (prompt delivery)

Premium Unld	875.00	879.00	+3.00
Gasoil EEC	767.75	768.75	-20.00
3.5 Fuel Oil	387.00	389.00	+2.00
Naphtha	669.00	671.00	+3.00

ICE Futures

Gas Oil

Apr	757.75-757.25	Jul	725.25-724.75
May	744.25-744.00	Aug	723.00-722.50
Jun	730.75-730.25		Volume: 645216

Brent (9.00pm)

May	78.14-78.10	Aug	77.12-77.09
Jun	77.49-77.48	Sep	76.83-76.80
Jul	77.34-77.32		Volume: 1870056

LIFFE

Cocoa

May	2122-2120	Jul	1982-1891
Jul	2124-2118	Sep	1939-1871
Sep	2132-2110	Dec	1950-1870
Dec	2060-2057		
Mar	2006-2000		
May	2000-1870		Volume: 65732

RobustaCoffee

May	2174-2172	Jan	2045-1941
Jul	2138-2133	Mar	2040-1985
Sep	2101-2090		
Nov	2090-2041		Volume: 15414

White Sugar (FOB)

Reuters		Dec	574.90-574.10
		Mar	564.30-558.90
May	618.50-618.00	May	548.80-548.00
Aug	604.70-604.50	Aug	524.60-522.00
Oct	588.60-587.60		Volume: 77690

London Grain Futures

LIFFE Wheat (close £/t)

May	210.00	Jul	204.00	Nov	222.00
Jan	unq	Mar	unq	Volume: 1459	

Synthomer's bosses give the shares a helping hand



Jessica Newman ***Market report***

The chief executive and finance boss of Synthomer were among board members buying up thousands of shares in the polymer maker after its poor full-year results sent the shares down to five-month lows.

In what appeared to be an attempt to revive the FTSE 250 group's share price, Michael Willome, 56, chief executive, bought 24,500 shares at 110p (worth £26,950) and Lily Liu, 51, the group's chief financial officer, bought 10,333 shares at 111p (worth £1,366). Holly Van Deursen, 64, a non-executive director, bought 20,000 shares.

The boardroom buying represented an outward sign of optimism among directors in a company that rattled the City yesterday with a sharp swing to a full-year loss of £47.6 million. In 2021 it had recorded a pre-tax profit of £283.9 million. Synthomer also warned that lower demand for its rubber gloves would not abate this year. The vote of confidence provided a lift to the shares, though, which closed up 6½p, or 6 per cent, at 116¼p.

The wider market was just as upbeat as concerns about the state of the financial sector continued to fade. The FTSE 100, rising for a third session, finished the day 80.02 points, or 1.1 per cent, higher at 7,564.27. A tier below, the FTSE 250 improved 236.12 points, or 1.3 per cent, to 18,632.81.

Banks, which have borne the brunt of the chaos resulting from the failures of Credit Suisse and Silicon Valley Bank, extended their recovery rally after UBS said that Sergio Ermotti would take charge again at the Swiss lender to steer its takeover of Credit Suisse, its rival. The appointment appeared comforting to the market, with **Barclays** rising by 4¾p, or 3.5 per cent, to 142p; **HSBC** by 13p, or 2.4 per cent, to 554p; **Standard Chartered** by 9¼p, or 1.6 per cent, to 603½p; and **Lloyds Banking Group** by ¾p, or 1.6 per cent, to 47¼p. Other healthier financial stocks included **M&G**, the City fund management firm, which gained 6½p, or 3.7 per cent, to close on 186p.

Mortgage approvals rose in February for the first time in six months, lifting shares in housebuilders including **Persimmon**, which added 35½p, or 3 per cent, to reach £12.36½. **Bellway** advanced 146p, or 7.2 per cent, to £21.87 and **Vistry** was marked up by 32½p, or 4.4 per cent, at 766p.

Ocado, recovering from the previous day's fall that had been sparked by a disappointing trading update, topped the Footsie leaderboard with a rise of 34p, or 7.7 per cent, to 478p. **Tesco** also closed up — in its case by 7½p, or 3 per cent, at 262½p — after Morgan Stanley moved to an "overweight" recommendation.

Elsewhere, concerns about **Smith & Nephew**'s "track record of delivering consistent mid-single-digit growth" prompted Barclays to downgrade the medical equipment maker to "underweight". The shares slipped 12½p, or 1.1 per cent, to £11.20½.

Off the main market, **Futura Medical** received a boost after the junior drugs maker said it had submitted a full response to the US Food and Drug Administration's questions about its erectile dysfunction gel. The shares leapt 2p, or 4.7 per cent, to 44½p.

Investors in **RM**, one of Britain's oldest technology companies, took solace in the fact that it expects growth throughout its divisions in the year ahead despite a "difficult" 2022 in which it swung to a £14.5 million loss. The company's shares climbed 5¼p, or 7.9 per cent, to a seven-month high of 70¼p.

Wall Street report

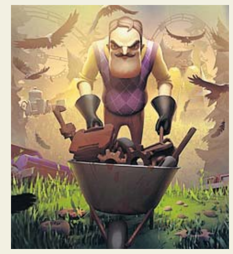
Indices advanced as fears of more bank failures and disruption to the wider financial sector faded. The Dow Jones industrial average rose 323.35 points, or 1 per cent, to 32,717.60. The S&P 500 was up 56.54 points, or 1.4 per cent, at 4,027.81.

TECHNOLOGY

Big performance for TinyBuild

TinyBuild may have described 2022 as "possibly the hardest test", but full-year results appear to show the video games developer passed with flying colours.

The company reported a 27 per cent rise in pre-tax profits to $15.9 million for the year to December 31. Revenues grew by 21 per cent to $63.3 million and its bosses hailed the "solid performance" of its new titles, including *Hello Neighbor 2*, along with "robust" back-catalogue sales, which represented 80 per cent of the group's total revenues. Its shares bounced off record lows, rising by 4½p, or 9.9 per cent, to 50p.



Video games such as Hello Neighbor 2 have been hits for TinyBuild

TinyBuild, which is listed on Aim, London's junior stock market, said its pipeline for 2023 and beyond was strong and included larger-budget games and further investment in its catalogue, including updates and console launches.

It was a different story last night for Electronic Arts, the company behind the "Fifa" football video game franchise and "The Sims", which said it would lay off about 6 per cent of its 12,900 staff workforce and reduce office space, amid a slowdown and higher costs. The shares rose 1 per cent to $119.19.

JULIA NIKHINSON/REUTERS



Schultz in union with Starbucks

Howard Schultz, the former boss of Starbucks, has defended himself and the coffee chain against allegations of "union busting" at a US Senate committee hearing in Washington.

The Seattle-based company has denied allegations that it illegally dismissed pro-union baristas or spied on workers as hundreds of stores organised unions starting in late 2021. Starbucks said it did not violate labour law by offering new benefits — including higher wages, student loan repayment tools and a savings account programme — only to non-unionised stores, as the National Labor Relations Board has alleged.

Bernie Sanders, chairman of the Senate health, education, labour and pensions committee, told Schultz that "Starbucks has waged the most aggressive and illegal union-busting campaign in the modern history of our country".

Schultz, 69, replied: "These are allegations and Starbucks has not broken the law." Schultz, who left his third stint as chief executive on March 20, said he did not have any direct role in sacking workers who supported the union or closing unionised stores. He remains on the company's board.

His return as Starbucks' interim leader in April last year was "95 per cent focused on the operations of the business" and his involvement in its union strategy had been "*de minimis*", he said. The shares rose $1.90, or 1.9 per cent, to close at $100.62.

The day's biggest movers

Company	Change
Ocado Recovers some losses	7.7%
Bellway Positive mortgage approvals data	7.2%
Synthomer Board members buy shares	6%
Essentra Positive annual results	5.4%
Barclays Banking shares continue to rebound	3.5%
Smith & Nephew Barclays cuts to "underweight"	-1.1%
Digital 9 Infrastructure Jefferies downgrades to "underperform"	-2.4%
Aston Martin Lagonda Loses momentum after recent run higher	-2.7%
WAG Payment Solutions Profit-taking	-4.2%
Next Cautious outlook	-4.3%

London Grain Futures

LIFFE Wheat (close £/t)

May	210.00	Jul	204.00	Nov	222.00
Jan	unq	Mar	unq	Volume: 1459	

London Metal Exchange

(Official)

	Cash	3mth	Dec 22
Copper Gde A ($/tonne)	9047.0-9052.0	9044.0-9045.0	8995.0-9005.0
Lead ($/tonne)	2180.0-2182.0	2151.0-2153.0	2193.0-2198.0
Zinc Spec Hi Gde ($/tonne)	3034.5-3035.0	2990.0-2991.0	2867.0-2872.0
Alum Hi Gde ($/tonne)	2365.5-2366.0	2409.5-2410.0	2593.0-2598.0
Nickel ($/tonne)	24150.0-24200.0	24400.0-24450.0	25880.0-25930.0
Tin ($/tonne) (15mth)	26095.0-26100.0	25950.0-26000.0	25475.0-25525.0

Gold/Precious metals (US dollars per ounce)

Because of a technical issue, the gold fix prices are from Tuesday.

Bullion: Open $1972.65
Close $1961.88-1962.17 High $1972.73
Low $1958.67
AM $1853.60 **PM** $1852.70
Krugerrand $1172.00-1244.00 (£951.75-1010.22)
Platinum $1092.00 (£886.78)
Silver $23.29 (£18.92)
Palladium $1721.11 (£1397.66)

European money deposits %

Currency	1mth	3mth	6mth	12mth
Dollar	0.13	0.20	0.29	0.55
Sterling	4.20	4.35	4.60	0.81
Euro	0.10	0.15	0.20	0.50

Money rates %

Base Rates Clearing Banks 4.25 ECB Refi 3.00 US Fed Fd 4.75-5.00

Halifax Mortgage Rate 6.99

Treasury Bills (Dis) Buy: 1 mth 4.080; 3 mth 4.249. Sell: 1 mth 3.850; 3 mth 4.120

	1 mth	2 mth	3 mth	6 mth	12 mth
Interbank Rates	4.1987	0.0000	4.3538	4.5988	0.0000
Eurodollar Deps	4.98-4.975.23	5.05-5.30	5.08-5.33	5.00-5.25	5.16-5.23

Sterling spot and forward rates

Mkt Rates for	Range	Close	1 month	3 month
Copenhagen	8.4518-8.4840	8.4731-8.4743	111ds	373ds
Euro	1.1388-1.1350	1.1375-1.1374	10pr	32pr
Montreal	1.6708-1.6787	1.6719-1.6721	2pr	4pr
New York	1.2303-1.2359	1.2313-1.2314	7pr	20pr
Oslo	12.753-12.849	12.847-12.851	95ds	314ds
Stockholm	12.756-12.841	12.838-12.842	217ds	616ds
Tokyo	161.51-163.46	163.34-163.34	58ds	191ds
Zurich	1.1310-1.1360	1.1332-1.1333	29ds	93ds

Premium = pr Discount = ds

Dollar rates

Australia	1.4970-1.4971
Canada	1.3579-1.3579
Denmark	6.8814-6.8819
Euro	0.9237-0.9238
Hong Kong	7.8498-7.8501
Japan	132.65-132.65
Malaysia	4.4199-4.4201
Norway	10.433-10.437
Singapore	1.3295-1.3297
Sweden	10.426-10.429
Switzerland	0.9203-0.9204

Other Sterling

Argentina peso	256.44-256.45
Australia dollar	1.8433-1.8435
Bahrain dinar	0.4612-0.4680
Brazil real	6.3271-6.3308
Euro	1.1374-1.1376
Hong Kong dollar	9.6657-9.6667
India rupee	101.28-101.28
Indonesia rupiah	18524-18598
Kuwait dinar KD	0.3766-0.3789
Malaysia ringgit	5.4585-5.4587
New Zealand dollar	1.9791-1.9795
Singapore dollar	1.6371-1.6374
S Africa rand	22.283-22.294
U A E dirham	4.5200-4.5204

Exchange rates

	Bid	Change
Australia $	1.842	
Canada $	1.672	-0.01
Denmark Kr	8.467	-0.01
Euro €	1.137	
Hong Kong $	9.664	-0.01
Hungary	432.967	-0.12
Indonesia	18545.875	-52.11
Israel Shk	4.405	+0.04
Japan Yen	163.121	+1.67
New Zealand $	1.978	
Norway Kr	12.833	+0.02
Poland	5.330	
Russia	95.099	+0.49
S Africa Rd	22.262	-0.14
Sweden Kr	12.819	+0.06
Switzerland Fr	1.132	
Turkey Lira	23.562	+0.01
USA $	1.231	

Rates supplied by Morningstar

MORNINGSTAR® Data as shown is for information purposes only. No offer is made by Morningstar or this publication



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The Times unit trust information service

ALLIANZ GLOBAL INVESTORS
Inv Serv: 020 7065 1400 Helpline: 0800 317 573

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Gilt Yield A ‡@	206.01	...	+0.27	...
Strategic Bond Fund ‡@	153.84	...	-0.79	...
UK Corp Bond C ‡@	104.79	...	-0.78	3.87
UK Eqty C ‡@	6317.26	...	-14.91	3.28
UK Eqty Inc A ‡@	317.32	...	+2.74	...
UK Gwth A ‡@	7898.99	...	+67.35	...
UK Index A Inc ‡@	1423.81	...	-5.83	3.01
UK Mid Cap A ‡@	4654.61	...	-11.35	...

ARTEMIS FUND MGRS LTD
0800 092 2051
Authorised Inv Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Capital R Acc ‡@	2112.09	...	+16.39	...
Euro Opps R Acc ‡@	91.26	...	-0.48	...
Euro Opps R Inc ‡@	85.36	...	-0.46	...
European Growth R Acc ‡@	395.16	...	+3.37	...
Global Energy R Acc ‡@	40.37	...	+0.45	1.14
Global Growth R Acc ‡@	332.99	...	+1.92	...
Global Income R Acc ‡@	151.62	...	+1.22	...
Global Income R Inc ‡@	95.32	...	+0.77	...
Global Select R Acc ‡@	147.64	...	+0.60	...
High Income R Inc ‡@	62.09	...	+0.22	...
Income R Acc ‡@	501.99	...	+4.71	...
Income R Inc ‡@	220.07	...	+2.07	...
Monthly Dist R Inc ‡@	63.60	...	+0.27	4.89
Strategic Assets R Acc ‡@	88.64	...	+0.76	...
Strategic Bond R M Acc ‡@	95.26	...	+0.07	...
Strategic Bond R M Inc ‡@	49.99	...	+0.04	...
Strategic Bond R Q Acc ‡@	95.09	...	+0.07	...
Strategic Bond R Q Inc ‡@	49.76	...	+0.04	...
UK Growth R Acc ‡@	687.92	...	+9.37	...
UK Smaller Cos R Acc ‡@	1801.36	...	+7.34	...
UK Special Sits R Acc ‡@	674.77	...	+8.07	...

AXA FRAMLINGTON UNIT MGMT LTD
Dling: 0845 602 1952 Priv Clients: 0845 777 5511

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Equity Inc ‡@	572.40	...	-2.70	4.43
Gilt Acc @	201.30	211.80	+0.10	...
Gilt Inc @	74.35	78.24	-0.39	...
Health Acc ‡@	2881.00	...	-24.00	...
Jap Smlr Co Ac @	62.56	66.09	-0.19	0.30
Managed Inc ‡@	138.30	...	...	4.20
Monthly Inc Inc ‡@	219.30	...	+0.80	4.42
UK Growth Inc ‡@	208.10	...	+1.00	0.64
UK Select Opps Inc ‡@	1840.00	...	+13.00	1.03
UK Sml Cos Inc ‡@	253.30	...	+0.90	0.04

AXA FUND MANAGERS LTD
Admin & Enq 0117 989 0808
AXA Trusts

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Gen Acc ‡@	2101.00	...	+6.00	2.64
Gen Inc ‡@	1079.00	...	-2.00	2.70

UK/Global Investment Companies

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Euro Acc A ‡@	234.70	...	...	...
Extra Inc Inc B ‡@	86.74	...	+0.24	1.16
Global Gwth Acc R ‡@	288.10	...	+4.10	0.52
Japan Acc A ‡@	162.30	...	+2.20	...
Pac Gwth Acc A ‡@	479.80	...	-17.60	...

CIS UNIT MANAGERS LTD
08457 46 46 46

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
European Gwth ‡@	209.70	...	+2.10	...
Sus Leaders ‡@	764.30	...	+5.00	...
UK Growth ‡@	608.30	...	+5.80	...
UK Income ‡@	206.30	...	+1.50	...

CLOSE FUND MANAGEMENT LTD
0870 606 6402

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Beacon Inv ‡	84.88	...	+0.35	0.01

Dealing: 020 7426 6232

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Winchester ‡	3519.22	...	+10.15	0.86

EDENTREE INV MGMT LTD
0800 358 3010

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Resp & Sust Sterling Bond ‡	85.51	...	+0.13	4.01
Resp & Sust Eurp Eq ‡	321.80	...	+3.60	...
Resp & Sust Glbl Eq ‡	323.10	...	+0.10	...
Resp & Sust Mgd Income ‡	119.60	...	+0.70	...
Resp & Sust UK Eq ‡	213.60	...	+0.70	1.52
Resp & Sust UK Equity Opps ‡	268.20	...	+0.60	1.13

F & C FUND MANAGEMENT LTD (OEICS)
Enqs: 0870 601 6183 Dealing: 0870 601 6083
Share Class 1 - Retail

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Corporate Bd ‡@	49.99	...	-0.31	...
Emerging Mkts ‡@	116.50	...	-0.50	...
Euro Gwth & Inc 1 ‡@	1221.00	...	+8.00	...
Extra Inc Bond ‡@	43.42	...	+0.02	...
FTSE All-Shr Track ‡@	421.70	...	+3.90	...
Global Gwth SC1 ‡@	296.40	...	-0.20	...
High Inc Trst @	10.97	11.57	-0.01	...
Max Inc Bond ‡@	42.74	...	+0.04	...
Multi Man Caut ‡@	70.41	...	...	3.18
Multi Man Distr ‡@	60.44	...	...	3.37
North Amer ‡@	798.00	...	-4.30	...
Pacific Gwth ‡@	486.30	...	+2.40	0.04
Strategic Bd ‡@	194.60	...	...	...
UK Equity ‡@	3446.00	...	+2.00	1.27
UK Gwth & Inc Acc 1 ‡@	658.50	...	...	...
UK Gwth & Inc Dist ‡@	234.70	...	...	...
UK Smaller Cos ‡@	995.00	...	+4.40	...

FIDELITY INTERNATIONAL
Private Clnts 0800 414161 Broker Dlgs 0800 414181

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Amer Spec Sits ‡@	2174.00	...	+20.00	...
American ‡@	5047.00	...	+8.00	...
Euro Opps ‡@	583.70	...	+4.40	...
European ‡@	3416.00	...	+23.00	...
Extra Income ‡@	22.35	...	+0.03	5.29
Glob Spec Sits ‡@	5340.00	...	+38.00	...
Global Focus ‡@	2850.00	...	+8.00	...
International ‡@	149.50	...	+0.20	0.08
Japan ‡@	551.30	...	+1.80	...
Moneybldr Bal ‡@	43.38	...	+0.09	...
Moneybldr Glob	327.60	327.60	-0.10	0.21
Moneybldr Gwth ‡@	76.12	...	-0.95	2.97
Moneybldr Inc ‡@	29.35	...	+0.06	...
Moneybldr UK Ind ‡@	127.18	...	+1.15	...
Special Sits ‡@	4351.00	...	+39.00	...
Wealthbuilder	69.75	72.18	+0.53	...

HALIFAX INVESTMENT FUND MGRS LTD
01296 386 386
Authorised Inv Funds
Share Class `C

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Corporate Bond ‡@	32.55	...	+0.04	...
Ethical ‡@	107.70	...	-0.10	...
European ‡@	110.40	...	+1.00	...
Far Eastern ‡	113.80	...	...	1.77
Fund of Inv Tst ‡@	131.50	...	+1.00	...
Intl Gwth ‡	122.90	...	+0.20	...
Japanese ‡	68.99	...	+0.11	...
North Amer ‡	144.20	...	-0.50	...
Smaller Cos ‡@	100.20	...	+0.47	...
Special Sits ‡@	48.85	...	...	...
UK Equity Inc ‡@	89.75	...	+0.35	...
UK FTSE 100 IT ‡@	69.39	...	+0.67	...
UK FTSE All-S IT ‡@	77.85	...	+0.26	...
UK Growth ‡@	81.33	...	+0.28	...

HSBC GLOBAL ASSET MGMT (UK) LTD
Enq: 0845 745 6123 Dlg: 0845 745 6126 Mon-Fri 8-6
HSBC Index Tracker Investment Funds (OEIC)

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Amer Ind Acc ‡@	889.43	...	-3.76	...
Amer Ind Inc ‡@	721.92	...	-3.03	...
Euro Ind Acc ‡@	1188.27	...	+11.66	...
Euro Ind Inc ‡@	759.20	...	+7.45	...
FTSE 100 Ind Acc ‡@	274.71	...	+2.70	...
FTSE 100 Ind Inc ‡@	124.81	...	+1.22	...
FTSE 250 Ind Acc ‡@	277.10	...	+2.30	...
FTSE 250 Ind Inc ‡@	170.18	...	+1.42	...
FTSE All-S Acc ‡@	695.89	...	+6.34	...
FTSE All-S Inc ‡@	351.81	...	+3.20	...
Jap Ind Acc ‡@	141.35	...	+0.19	...
Jap Ind Inc ‡@	110.17	...	+0.15	...
Pac Ind Acc ‡@	499.35	...	+0.33	2.58
Pac Ind Inc ‡@	314.79	...	+0.20	2.64

HSBC Investment Funds (OEIC) - Retail Share Class

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Balanced Acc ‡@	238.99	...	+0.71	...
Balanced Inc ‡@	151.95	...	-0.14	...
Corp Bd Acc ‡@	266.29	...	+0.24	...
Corp Bd Inc ‡@	103.32	...	+0.09	...
Gilt & Fd Int Acc ‡@	497.78	...	+1.62	...
Gilt & Fd Int Inc ‡@	74.17	...	+0.24	...
Income Acc ‡@	702.93	...	+6.18	...
Income Inc ‡@	288.40	...	+2.53	...
Monthly Inc Acc ‡@	313.41	...	+0.77	3.21
Monthly Inc Inc ‡@	127.03	...	+0.81	...
UK Grth & Inc Ret B Acc ‡@	143.15	...	+1.29	...
UK Grth & Inc Ret B Inc ‡@	63.19	...	+0.57	...
UK Gth & Inc Acc ‡@	143.15	...	+1.29	...
UK Gth & Inc Inc ‡@	63.19	...	+0.57	...

HSBC Specialist Investment Funds (OEIC)

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
American Index Retail Acc ‡@	889.43	...	-3.76	...
American Index Retail Inc ‡@	721.92	...	-3.03	...
Asian Gth Acc ‡@	147.77	...	-0.07	...
Asian Gth Inc ‡@	130.99	...	-0.06	...
Chinese Eq Acc ‡@	513.81	...	+0.27	...
Chinese Eq Inc ‡@	434.76	...	+0.22	...
Euro Gth Acc ‡@	973.97	...	+4.05	...
Euro Gth Inc ‡@	817.05	...	+3.39	...

IGNIS ASSET MGMT
Dlg: 0141 222 8282

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
American Gth Inc @	322.55	340.42	-3.34	...
Balanced Growth @	262.17	276.69	-0.93	1.52
Balanced Growth Acc @	393.13	414.92	-1.40	1.49
Corporate Bond ‡@	99.69	...	-0.89	4.77
European Growth @	403.88	426.26	-3.57	2.18
European Growth Acc @	475.71	502.07	-4.21	2.24
Glob Gwth @	331.53	349.90	-3.09	...
Higher Yield @	83.98	88.64	-0.29	...
Higher Yield Acc @	275.04	290.28	-0.92	...
Japan @	49.06	51.78	-0.03	...
Managed @	130.89	138.15	-0.06	0.66
Managed Trust @	71.96	76.96	+0.17	...
Mngd Pfolio Inc @	95.54	100.84	-0.11	0.58
Pacific Grth @	498.71	526.34	-2.81	1.34
Smaller Comp @	756.24	798.14	+1.64	0.15
Smaller Cos @	628.94	663.79	+1.36	0.21

INSIGHT INVESTMENT FDS MANAGEMENT LTD
Client Servs: 0207 163 4000
Insight Investment Multi-Manager Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Well Bldr Bal Acc ‡@	96.05	...	-0.32	...
Well Bldr Gwth Acc ‡@	93.79	...	-0.36	...

INVESCO FUND MGRS LTD
Dling: 0800 085 8571 Inv Serv: 0800 085 8677
Brkr Serv: 0800 028 2121
INVESCO Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
UK Str Inc N/Trl ‡@	323.57	...	-0.12	7.05

INVESCO PERPETUAL Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Childrens Acc ‡@	451.01	...	+2.55	...
Corp Bond Acc ‡@	198.47	...	+0.31	2.82
High Income Inc ‡@	308.59	...	+1.66	3.80
Income & Grth Inc ‡@	402.43	...	+1.25	...
Income Inc ‡@	1217.35	...	+6.80	3.33
Money Acc ‡@	92.55	...	+0.01	...
Monthly Inc Plus Inc ‡@	89.98	...	+0.06	5.53
UK Aggressive Inc ‡@	154.28	...	-0.24	3.15
UK Growth Acc ‡@	886.79	...	+8.83	...
UK Sml Cos Eqty Acc ‡@	1308.82	...	+0.61	...
UK Sml Cos Gwth ‡@	82.54	...	+0.04	...

INVESTEC FUND MGRS
Broker Support and Dealing: 020 7597 1900
OEIC Series i,ii,iii, & iv

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
American A Acc ‡@	661.08	...	+1.84	...
Asia ex Japan A Acc ‡@	773.91	...	+6.15	...
Capital Accumulator A Acc ‡@	231.48	...	-3.81	...
Cautious Managed A Acc ‡@	377.46	...	+0.63	...
Cautious Managed A Inc ‡@	237.66	...	+0.40	...
Diversified Growth A Acc ‡@	129.95	...	+0.61	...
Diversified Growth A Inc ‡@	137.62	...	+0.65	...
Diversified Income A Acc ‡@	321.60	...	+0.57	...
Diversified Income A Inc ‡@	68.31	...	+0.12	...
Emerging Mkts Blended Debt A Acc ‡@	112.92	...	+0.25	...
Emerging Mkts Blended Debt A Acc Gross ‡@	125.82	...	+0.20	...
Emerging Mkts Blended Debt A Inc ‡@	64.56	...	+0.15	...
Emerging Mkts Equity A Acc ‡@	147.65	...	+1.61	...
Emrg Mkts Local Curr Debt A Acc ‡@	182.43	...	-0.10	...
Emrg Mkts Local Curr Debt A Inc ‡@	70.69	...	-0.04	...
Emrg Mkts Local Curr Debt Gross I Acc ‡@	220.49	...	-0.05	5.42
Enhanced Natural Resources A Acc ‡@	134.24	...	-1.25	...
Global Bond A Acc ‡@	139.30	...	+4.03	...
Global Bond A Inc ‡@	109.33	...	+3.00	...
Global Bond I Gross Inc ‡@	1167.00	...	+29.78	...
Global Dynamic A Acc ‡@	193.61	...	+1.95	0.47
Global Energy A Acc ‡@	170.97	...	-1.14	...
Global Equity A Acc ‡@	227.55	...	+0.51	...
Global Franchise A Acc ‡@	302.00	...	+1.06	...
Global Free Enterprise A Acc ‡@	1214.51	...	+9.24	...
Global Gold A Acc ‡@	204.08	...	+4.16	0.53
Global Special Situations A Acc ‡@	315.91	...	+3.10	...
Global Special Situations A Inc ‡@	244.35	...	+2.39	...
Managed Growth A Acc ‡@	291.33	...	+0.65	...
Monthly High Income A Acc ‡@	243.45	...	+0.43	...
Monthly High Income A Inc ‡@	63.17	...	+0.01	...
Multi-Asset Protector A Acc ‡@	167.10	...	+0.12	...
Strategic Bond A Acc ‡@	244.54	...	+0.19	...
Strategic Bond A Inc ‡@	119.47	...	+0.09	...
Target Return A Acc ‡@	102.03	...	+0.44	0.82
Target Return A Inc ‡@	87.63	...	+0.01	0.87
UK Alpha A Acc ‡@	2631.30	...	+19.71	...
UK Blue Chip A Acc ‡@	770.11	...	+3.15	...
UK Smaller Companies A Acc ‡@	4532.98	...	+12.76	...
UK Smaller Companies A Inc ‡@	4065.81	...	+11.45	...
UK Special Situations A Acc ‡@	1385.75	...	+15.86	...
UK Special Situations A Inc ‡@	496.75	...	+5.69	...

For ISIS Asset Mgmt see F&C Fd Mgmt Ltd (OEICS)

JANUS HENDERSON INVESTORS
Investors Serv: 0800 832 832 Dlng: 0845 946 4646

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
All Stks Credit A Inc ‡@	115.10	...	+0.20	1.88
Asian Div Inc U Trst Inc ‡@	78.65	...	+0.16	5.87
Cautious Man Fd A Acc ‡@	284.80	...	+1.10	...
Cautious Man Fd A Inc ‡@	140.50	...	+0.50	...
China Opp Fund A Acc ‡@	1191.00	...	+17.00	...
Emg Mkts Opps Fd A Acc ‡@	193.30	...	+1.60	0.73
Erpn Grth Fund A Acc ‡@	297.80	...	+2.30	...
Erpn Sel Opps Fd A Acc ‡@	2258.00	...	+28.00	...
Fix Int Mnthly Inc Fd Acc ‡@	28.58	...	-0.12	...
Global Equity Fund Acc ‡@	4191.00	...	+9.00	...
Global Equity Income A Inc ‡@	65.41	...	+0.31	...
Global Tech A Acc ‡@	2922.00	...	-9.00	...
Instl UK Idx Opps A Acc ‡@	112.79	...	+1.06	...
M-Asset Abs Ret A Acc ‡@	160.90	...	+0.10	...
M-Man Active Fd A Acc ‡@	251.50	...	-1.20	...
M-Man Inc Grth A Inc ‡@	145.00	...	...	...
M-Man Inc Grth Fd A Acc ‡@	186.40	...	...	...
Sterling Bond U Trst Acc ‡@	205.80	...	+0.40	1.62
Sterling Bond U Trst Inc ‡@	56.20	...	+0.09	1.64
Strategic Bond A Inc ‡@	104.70	...	-0.20	...
UK Abs Ret Fd A Acc ‡@	167.80	...	+0.30	...
UK Alpha Fund A Acc ‡@	134.70	...	+1.80	...
UK Irsh Sm Co Fd A Acc ‡@	742.50	...	-1.70	...
UK Property A Acc @	264.95	278.15	+0.01	2.63
UK Property A Inc @	105.80	111.07	...	2.68
US Growth Fund A Acc ‡@	1688.00	...	+6.00	...

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JP MORGAN ASSET MGMT
OEIC

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Asia A Acc ‡@	259.00	...	+2.20	...
Emerging Mkts ‡@	261.50	...	+3.00	...
Eur Dyn (ex-UK) A Acc ‡@	270.30	...	+4.70	...
Euro Smllr Cos ‡@	864.00	...	+17.40	...
Europe A Acc ‡@	1734.00	...	+35.00	...
Gbl Hi Yld Bd A Acc ‡@	117.30	...	+1.10	5.30
Gbl Hi Yld Bd A Inc ‡@	30.89	...	+0.29	5.45
Gl ex-UK Bd A Acc ‡@	257.40	...	-0.70	0.07
Gl ex-UK Bd A Inc ‡@	196.80	...	-0.50	0.08
Glb Fins A Acc ‡@	1077.00	...	+1.00	...
Global A Acc ‡@	2049.00	...	+11.00	...
Japan A Acc ‡@	516.80	...	+6.20	...
Multi-Man Tst A Acc ‡@	1268.00	...	+16.00	...
Multi-Man Tst A Inc ‡@	1127.00	...	+15.00	...
Nat Resources ‡@	951.20	...	+17.30	2.50
New Europe A ‡@	155.70	...	+12.00	2.11
Portfolio ‡@	295.60	...	+0.40	0.98
Stg Corp Bd A Acc ‡@	85.59	...	-0.13	...
Stg Corp Bd A Inc ‡@	48.30	...	-0.08	...
UK Act 350 A Acc ‡@	199.00	...	-2.20	...
UK Dynamic Acc ‡@	206.70	...	+4.30	2.07
UK Dynamic Inc ‡@	148.20	...	+3.10	2.03
UK Equity A Acc ‡@	401.90	...	+0.60	3.45
UK Equity A Inc ‡@	46.44	...	+0.07	3.49
UK Eqy & Bd Inc Acc ‡@	167.10	...	-0.20	...
UK Eqy & Bd Inc Inc ‡@	90.29	...	-0.48	...
UK Higher Inc A Acc ‡@	1132.00	...	+7.00	...
UK Higher Inc A Inc ‡@	531.30	...	+2.00	...
UK Sm Cos A Acc ‡@	563.30	...	+7.00	...
UK Str Eq Inc A Acc ‡@	197.90	...	+3.50	...
UK Str Eq Inc A Inc ‡@	100.50	...	+1.77	...
US A Acc ‡@	1036.00	...	+25.00	...
US Sm Cos A Acc ‡@	976.20	...	+14.00	...

JUPITER UT MGRS LTD
020 7581 3020

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Absolute Return ‡@	32.02	...	-0.01	...
Distribution and Growth ‡@	96.30	...	+0.46	...
Emg Euro Opps ‡@	145.34	...	-31.23	...
Euro Special Sits ‡@	459.14	...	+2.68	...
European ‡@	2909.71	...	+18.90	...
Financial Opps ‡@	668.53	...	+5.92	0.19
Income Trust ‡@	503.69	...	+5.90	...
Merlin Bal (Acc) ‡@	228.79	...	-0.79	...
Merlin Gwth (Acc) ‡@	527.70	...	-3.46	...
Merlin Inc (Acc) ‡@	338.13	...	-1.18	...
Merlin Wwide (Inc) ‡@	372.82	...	-1.30	...
UK Growth ‡@	251.98	...	+1.16	...
UK Special Sits (Inc) ‡@	207.50	...	+2.38	...

LEGAL & GENERAL (UT MGRS) LTD
Enquiries: 0870 050 0955 Dealing: 0870 050 0956

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Equity Acc @	2616.00	2639.00	-8.00	2.12
Equity Dist @	893.80	902.00	-2.70	2.15
Euro Ind Acc ‡@	523.00	...	+4.70	...
Euro Ind Inc ‡@	342.60	...	+3.00	...
Fixed Int Acc ‡@	131.10	...	+0.20	...
Fixed Int Dist ‡@	61.14	...	+0.10	...
Glob Gwth Acc @	243.90	243.90	-1.30	1.15
Glob Health Acc ‡@	106.40	...	-0.40	...
Glob Tech Acc ‡@	90.11	...	-2.14	...
Gwth Tst Acc @	106.00	106.50	-1.00	0.17
High Inc Acc ‡@	121.40	...	...	5.13
Japan Ind Acc ‡@	69.16	...	+0.22	...
Pacific Ind Acc ‡@	200.00	...	...	2.97
UK 100 Ind Acc @	180.90	180.90	+0.90	3.19
UK Active Opps Acc @	249.90	252.90	-0.10	...
UK Index Acc ‡@	340.80	...	+3.10	...
UK Index Dist ‡@	164.20	...	+1.50	...
US Ind Acc ‡@	781.50	...	-7.30	...
Worldwide Acc ‡@	331.60	...	+1.10	...

M & G SECURITIES
Enq: 0800 390 390 Dealing Line: 0800 328 3196
Authorised Inv Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Charifund Inc ‡	1466.49	...	+12.62	5.41

Sterling Class A Investment Funds 1

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Euro Smlr Cos Acc ‡	525.29	...	-3.39	...
Euro Smlr Cos Inc ‡	462.50	...	-3.00	0.69

Sterling Class A Investment Funds 2

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Extra Income Inc ‡	682.71	...	+5.06	4.92
Gilt & Fxd Int Inc ‡	77.45	...	+0.34	2.01
Gl Hi Yd Bd Inc ‡	38.87	...	-0.41	...
Index Linked Bd Inc ‡	118.84	...	+1.57	...
Index Trckr Inc ‡	75.02	...	+0.18	3.59
Short Dated Corp Bd Inc ‡	24.80	...	...	...
UK Select A Inc ‡	2679.35	...	+20.24	...

Sterling Class A Investment Funds 3

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Corp Bd A Inc ‡	33.87	...	+0.06	3.58
Dividend Inc ‡	52.69	...	+0.47	...
Recovery A Inc ‡	106.05	...	+0.91	...
Sml Cos Inc ‡	320.81	...	+1.72	...

Sterling Class A Investment Funds 4

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Episode Allocation A Inc ‡@	137.52	...	+0.74	...

MARKS & SPENCER UNIT TRUST LTD
0808 005 5555

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
High Income	85.98	85.98	-0.27	...
High Income Acc	240.50	240.50	-0.80	...
UK 100 Comp Acc @	448.20	448.20	+0.80	...
UK 100 Cos @	220.20	220.20	+0.40	...
UK Select Pflo @	330.40	330.40	+0.80	...
UK Selection Port Acc @	683.70	683.70	+1.70	...
Worldwide Mgd Acc @	923.70	923.70	+0.60	...
Wwide Mgd @	540.30	540.30	+0.40	1.30

MORGAN STANLEY INVESTMENT MGMT LTD
Enquires: 0800 0961 962
The Morgan Stanley Funds (UK)
Class A Shares
Equity

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Dev Opp Fund F Acc ‡@	774.33	...	+10.04	...
Dev Opp Fund I Acc ‡@	770.21	...	+9.99	...
Glob Bal Inc F F Acc ‡@	922.39	...	+6.39	5.33
Glob Bal Inc F F Inc ‡@	854.06	...	+5.91	...
Glob Bal Inc F I Acc ‡@	921.00	...	+6.37	5.35
Glob Bal Inc F I Inc ‡@	852.65	...	+5.90	5.56
Glob Bal Sust F F Acc ‡@	930.32	...	+4.76	1.24
Glob Bal Sust F F Inc ‡@	915.21	...	+4.68	1.25
Glob Bal Sust F I Acc ‡@	929.12	...	+4.75	1.18
Glob Bal Sust F I Inc ‡@	914.93	...	+4.68	1.17
Glob Br Eq Inc Fund F Inc ‡@	1293.31	...	+5.43	...
Glob Br Eq Inc Fund I Acc ‡@	1787.33	...	+7.49	...
Glob Br Eq Inc Fund I Inc ‡@	1383.74	...	+5.80	...
Glob Br Fund I Acc (PH) ‡@	1534.32	...	+9.35	...
Glob Br Fund I Acc (PH) ‡@	13356.67	...	+54.27	...
Glob Br Fund I Inc (PH) ‡@	1464.02	...	+8.96	...
Glob Br Fund I Inc (PH) ‡@	3656.52	...	+14.85	...
Glob Ins Fund F Acc ‡@	517.49	...	+1.55	...
Glob Ins Fund F Inc ‡@	517.49	...	+1.55	...
Glob Ins Fund I Acc ‡@	515.03	...	+1.53	...
Glob Ins Fund I Inc ‡@	515.03	...	+1.53	...
Glob Sust Fund F Acc (PH) ‡@	1132.31	...	+6.09	...
Glob Sust Fund F Inc ‡@	1216.64	...	+3.95	...
Glob Sust Fund I Acc ‡@	1233.65	...	+4.01	...
Glob Sust Fund I Acc (PH) ‡@	1131.00	...	+6.08	...
Glob Sustain Fund F Acc ‡@	1240.38	...	+4.03	...
Stg Corp Bond F F Acc ‡@	119.96	...	+0.24	...
Stg Corp Bond F F Inc ‡@	94.42	...	+0.19	...
Stg Corp Bond F I Acc ‡@	2550.76	...	+5.09	...
Stg Corp Bond F I Inc ‡@	1331.31	...	+2.66	...
Sust Fixed Inc Opps F F Acc ‡@	927.54	...	+0.49	2.47
Sust Fixed Inc Opps F F Inc ‡@	890.05	...	+0.47	2.53
Sust Fixed Inc Opps F I Acc ‡@	923.30	...	+0.48	2.28
Sust Fixed Inc Opps F I Inc ‡@	889.58	...	+0.47	2.31
US Adv F F Acc ‡@	1398.50	...	+10.17	...
US Adv F F Acc (PH) ‡@	787.98	...	+7.77	...
US Adv F I Acc ‡@	1487.46	...	+10.81	...
US Adv F I Acc (PH) ‡@	825.74	...	+8.14	...

SANTANDER UNIT TST MGRS
08457 413002

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Bal Pfolio Inc ‡@	110.50	...	+0.40	...
Bal Port Gwth Acc ‡@	229.80	...	-0.30	...
Equity Inc Inc ‡@	192.20	...	-0.60	...
N&P UK Gwth Inc ‡@	182.80	...	+0.10	3.09
Stkmkt 100 Tkr @	259.20	259.20	+1.10	...
UK Growth Acc ‡@	440.50	...	-1.80	...
UK Growth Inc ‡@	235.30	...	-0.90	...

SCOTTISH MUTUAL INV MNGRS LTD
0141 248 6100

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
European Inc	1777.00	1873.48	+4.40	...
Far Eastern Inc	584.69	617.09	-0.73	...
Intl Growth Inc	380.56	400.59	+0.02	0.75
Japanese Inc	41.85	41.85	+0.43	...
Mutual European	2762.93	2908.99	-21.63	...
Mutual Far Eastern	937.68	989.64	+9.00	0.90
Mutual North Am	1983.00	2092.88	+6.23	0.24
Mutual UK Eq	1390.78	1467.84	+12.87	...
Nth American Inc	1227.65	1295.67	-7.28	...
UK Equity Inc	547.37	577.70	+4.59	...

SCOTTISH WIDOWS UNIT TRUST MGRS
0845 300 2244
Authorised Inv Funds (OEICs)
OEIC A Class
Managed Investment Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Bal Port A Acc ‡@	237.60	...	+0.80	...
Caut Port A Acc ‡@	207.10	...	+0.30	0.43
Caut Port A Inc ‡@	152.00	...	+0.30	0.60
Opps Port A Acc ‡@	280.20	...	+1.30	...
Prog Port A Acc ‡@	266.60	...	+1.10	...

Overseas Growth Investment Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Eur Sel Gth A Acc ‡@	3400.00	...	-3.00	...

Tracker and Specialist Investment Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
UK Trkr A Acc ‡@	379.70	...	+2.70	...
UK Trkr A Inc ‡@	190.40	...	+1.40	...

UK and Income Investment Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Corp Bond A Acc ‡@	283.50	...	-1.00	...
Corp Bond A Inc ‡@	104.90	...	-0.40	...
Envir Invtr A Acc ‡@	374.90	...	-3.90	1.28
Hi Inc Bond A Ac ‡@	227.20	...	-0.20	5.22
Hi Inc Bond A Inc ‡@	67.22	...	-0.06	5.37
Hi Res A Acc ‡@	374.10	...	...	...
Hi Res A Inc ‡@	116.10	...	...	...
Safety Plus A Acc ‡@	40.49	...	...	...
Strat Inc A Acc ‡@	186.20	...	-0.50	...
Strat Inc A Inc ‡@	81.65	...	-0.22	3.23
UK Gwth A Acc ‡@	192.20	...	+0.20	...
UK Sel Gwth A Acc ‡@	2267.00	...	-2.00	...

OEIC B Class
Tracker and Specialist Investment Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
UK Trkr B Acc ‡@	419.30	...	+3.10	...
UK Trkr B Inc ‡@	189.40	...	+1.40	...

UK and Income Investment Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Corp Bond B Acc ‡@	370.70	...	+0.90	...
Corp Bond B Inc ‡@	136.30	...	+0.30	...
UK Gwth B Acc ‡@	205.60	...	-0.30	1.79
UK Sel Gwth B Acc ‡@	2481.00	...	...	1.09

OEIC C Class
UK and Income Investment Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
UK Gth C Inc ‡@	124.00	...	+0.20	...
UK Sel Gwth C Acc ‡@	2598.00	...	...	1.29

STANDARD LIFE INVESTMENTS
0845 279 3003
Investment Funds (OEIC) - Retail Shares

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
AAA Inc CAT Acc ‡@	89.47	...	+0.02	1.38
AAA Inc CAT Inc ‡@	50.17	...	+0.01	1.39
AAA Income Acc ‡@	97.47	...	+0.03	...
Amer Eq Gth Acc ‡@	196.80	...	-1.00	...
Corp Bond Acc ‡@	155.10	...	+0.20	...
Corp Bond Inc ‡@	51.49	...	+0.07	...
Euro Eq Gth Acc ‡@	262.10	...	+3.90	...
Glb Advtg CAT Acc ‡@	146.80	...	+0.30	...
Glob Advtg Acc ‡@	193.80	...	+0.40	...
Glob Eq Uncstrd Acc ‡@	152.90	...	-0.30	...
Higher Inc Acc ‡@	143.50	...	+0.30	4.40
Higher Inc Inc ‡@	44.22	...	+0.09	4.52
Japan Eq Gth Acc ‡@	127.40	...	...	...
Managed Acc ‡@	353.80	...	+0.10	...
Select Inc Acc ‡@	91.51	...	...	2.21
Select Inc Inc ‡@	51.26	...	-0.26	2.21
UK Eq Gth Acc ‡@	372.70	...	+1.70	...
UK Eq Hi Alpha ‡@	230.00	...	+1.00	...
UK Eq Hi Inc Acc ‡@	263.30	...	+2.60	...
UK Eq Hi Inc Inc ‡@	71.26	...	+0.71	...
UK Ethical Acc ‡@	195.00	...	+2.10	...
UK Opps Acc ‡@	234.40	...	...	...
UK Opps Inc ‡@	211.70	...	...	...
UK Smlr Cos Acc ‡@	727.90	...	+2.80	...

SVS BROWN SHIPLEY FUNDS
Enquiries:0141 222 1151

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Balanced A Acc ‡@	132.81	...	+0.16	...
Balanced A Inc ‡@	118.03	...	+0.14	...
Cautious A Acc ‡@	111.31	...	+0.05	...
Cautious A Inc ‡@	95.76	...	+0.04	...
Dynamic A Acc ‡@	321.98	...	+0.65	...
Dynamic A Inc ‡@	288.90	...	+0.58	...
Growth A Acc ‡@	332.73	...	+0.51	...
Income A Acc ‡@	244.51	...	+0.27	...
Sterling Bond Acc ‡@	242.37	...	-0.28	...
Sterling Bond Inc ‡@	97.00	...	-0.11	...

THREADNEEDLE INVESTMENTS
Client Serv: 0800 0683000
Intermediary Serv: 0800 0684000
Institutional Shares (Class 2) (500000 GBP)

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Threadneedle UK Eq Opps Ins Inc ‡@	123.84	...	+1.05	...

Retail Shares (Class 1)

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Threadneedle HY Bd Rtl Inc ‡@	36.15	...	+0.04	...
Threadneedle Mthly Etr Inc Rtl Inc ‡@	76.90	...	+0.52	...
Threadneedle SterlingCorpBd Ins Inc ‡@	53.60	...	+0.05	...
Threadneedle SterlingCorpBd Rtl Inc ‡@	53.52	...	+0.04	...
Threadneedle Stg Bd Ret Inc ‡@	44.95	...	+0.14	...
Threadneedle Strat Bd Ret ‡@	40.55	...	+0.01	...
Threadneedle UK Eq Inc Rtl Inc ‡@	96.16	...	+0.60	...
Threadneedle UK Growth & Inc Rtl Inc ‡@	88.70	...	+0.63	...
Threadneedle UK Insti Rtl ‡@	177.95	...	+1.46	...
Threadneedle UK Mthly Inc Rtl Inc ‡@	67.15	...	+0.76	...
Threadneedle UK Rtl Inc ‡@	133.49	...	+1.16	...
Threadneedle UK Smaller Coms Rtl Inc ‡@	339.08	...	+2.19	...

For Resolution see Ignis

TU FUND MANAGERS LIMITED

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
British	910.10	910.10	+5.20	...
European	210.70	219.40	+1.00	...

* Yield expressed as CAR (Compound Annual Return); † Ex dividend; ‡Middle price; . . . No significant data. # Periodic charge deducted from capital; @ Exit charge

British funds

Stock Outstanding(£)	Stock		Price (£)	Wkly +/-	Int Yld %	Grs rd yld
Index-linked						
353.57	322.55	Tr IL 2½% 24 *	347.94	- .96	1.56	-0.94
111.75	101.51	Tr IL 0⅛% 24	110.18	- .31	...	-0.94
...	...	Tr IL 0⅛% 26	...		...	...
131.42	116.05	Tr IL 1¼% 27	129.14	- .48	1.06	-0.90
...	...	Tr IL 0⅛% 28	...		...	...
116.87	99.34	Tr IL 0⅛% 29	114.40	- .48	...	-0.83
...	...	Tr IL 0⅛% 31	...		...	...
350.71	304.33	Tr IL 4⅛% 30 *	341.99	-1.40	1.89	-0.85
144.86	120.71	Tr IL 1¼% 32	141.19	- .66	0.89	-0.88
136.57	111.38	Tr IL 0¾% 34	132.65	- .64	...	-0.82
243.84	197.88	Tr IL 2% 35 *	236.74	-1.08	1.03	-0.85
...	...	Tr IL 0⅛% 36	...		...	...
154.99	123.02	Tr IL 1⅛% 37	149.44	- .81	0.79	-0.84
...	...	Tr IL 0⅛% 39	...		...	...
146.53	112.13	Tr IL 0⅝% 40	140.41	- .85	...	-0.82
...	...	Tr IL 0⅛% 41	...		...	...
152.69	114.21	Tr IL 0⅝% 42	145.78	- .94	0.43	-0.84
136.96	99.06	Tr IL 0⅛% 44	130.13	- .92	...	-0.79
...	...	Tr IL 0⅛% 46	...		...	...
167.83	120.73	Tr IL 0¾% 47	159.09	-1.26	0.48	-0.82
...	...	Tr IL 0⅛% 48	...		...	...
162.45	113.42	Tr IL 0½% 50	153.35	-1.34	...	-0.81
155.05	104.48	Tr IL 0¼% 52	145.71	-1.39	...	-0.80
213.58	147.06	Tr IL 1¼% 55	200.93	-1.82	0.68	-0.83
...	...	Tr IL 0⅛% 56	...		...	...
158.55	109.84	Tr IL 0⅛% 58	147.52	-1.64	...	-0.80
181.67	113.18	Tr IL 0⅜% 62	168.40	-1.95	...	-0.81
...	...	Tr IL 0⅛% 65	...		...	...
177.27	101.43	Tr IL 0⅛% 68	162.77	-2.21	...	-0.82
...	...	Tr IL 0⅛% 73	...		...	...
350.71	304.33	Tr IL 4 ⅛% 30	341.99	-1.40	1.89	-0.85
Longs (Over 15 years)						
...	...	Tr 0⅛% 51	...		...	...
...	...	Tr 1¼% 51	...		...	...
145.21	104.09	Tr 3¾% 52	139.30	- .77	...	2.20
...	...	Tr 1½% 53	...		...	...
...	...	Tr 1⅝% 54	...		...	...
163.11	115.91	Tr 4¼% 55	156.25	- .94	2.72	2.17
...	...	Tr 1¾% 57	...		...	...
159.23	111.06	Tr 4% 60	152.08	- .99	...	2.18
...	...	Tr 0½% 61	...		...	...
...	...	Tr 2½% 65	...		...	...
148.43	99.15	Tr 3½% 68	140.96	-1.04	...	2.19
...	...	Tr 1⅝% 71	...		...	...
...	...	Tr 1⅛% 73	...		...	...
...	...	Tr 3{ }% 53	...		...	...
153.30	120.39	Tr 4¾% 38	148.75	- .57	3.19	2.13
...	...	Tr 1⅛% 39	...		...	...
144.14	111.87	Tr 4¼% 39	139.71	- .56	3.04	2.16
145.19	111.95	Tr 4¼% 40	140.60	- .58	...	2.18
...	...	Tr 1¼% 41	...		...	...
126.24	93.71	Tr 3¼% 44	121.73	- .57	...	2.23
153.16	117.05	Tr 4½% 42	148.10	- .64	3.04	2.18
132.31	100.60	Tr 3½% 45	127.55	- .61	...	2.23
152.26	113.32	Tr 4¼% 46	146.76	- .71	2.90	2.20
...	...	Tr 0⅞% 46	...		...	...
...	...	Tr 1½% 47	...		...	...
...	...	Tr 1¾% 49	...		...	...
156.13	114.38	Tr 4¼% 49	150.18	- .76	2.83	2.18
...	...	Tr 0⅝% 50	...		...	...
Mediums (5-15 years)						
...	...	Tr 4 ⅛% 27	...		...	...
...	...	Tr 1¼% 27	...		...	...
131.90	112.04	Tr 4¼% 27	129.20	- .27	3.29	1.71
...	...	Tr 0⅛% 28	...		...	...
...	...	Tr 1⅝% 28	...		...	...
...	...	Tr 0⅜% 26	...		...	...
...	...	Tr 1½% 26	...		...	...
155.76	132.92	Tr 6% 28	152.58	- .30	3.93	1.71
...	...	Tr 0½% 29	...		...	...
...	...	Tr 0⅞% 29	...		...	...
...	...	Tr 0⅜% 30	...		...	...
142.51	118.29	Tr 4¾% 30	139.27	- .41	3.41	1.87
...	...	Tr 0¼% 31	...		...	...
...	...	Tr 1% 32	...		...	...
136.85	111.72	Tr 4¼% 32	133.46	- .42	3.18	1.96
...	...	Tr 4 ⅛% 27	...		...	...
...	...	Tr 0⅞% 33	...		...	...
143.10	115.35	Tr 4½% 34	139.26	- .48	3.23	2.05
...	...	Tr 0⅝% 35	...		...	...
140.37	111.54	Tr 4¼% 36	136.41	- .49	3.12	2.10
...	...	Tr 1¾% 37	...		...	...
...	...	Tr 3{ }% 38	...		...	...
Shorts (under 5 years)						
...	...	Tr 2% 25	...		...	...
...	...	Tr 3{ }% 25	...		...	...
...	...	Tr 0⅛% 26	...		...	...
...	...	Tr 0⅝% 25	...		...	...
134.70	119.37	Tr 5% 25	132.38	- .20	3.78	1.52
...	...	Tr 0¼% 25	...		...	...
112.66	98.29	Tr 2¾% 24	110.70	- .17	...	1.54
...	...	Tr 0¾% 23	...		...	...
108.04	95.23	Tr 2¼% 23	106.31	- .15	...	1.46
...	...	Tr 0⅛% 24	...		...	...
...	...	Tr 1% 24	...		...	...

* maturities having an eight-month indexation lag.

Due to problems with our data provider, the figures for British Funds shown are for Tuesday, March 28

MORNINGSTAR® Data as shown is for information purposes only. No offer is made by Morningstar or this publication

Business Equity prices

Automobiles & parts

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
381½	89½	Aston Martin Lag	225⅝	– 6¼	...	-1.3

Banking & finance

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
236	133	**Abrdn**	208⅝	+ 3	...	4.5
2604	1729	**Admiral**	2018	+ 23½	...	10.2
71⅜	33	ADVFN♦	33	– 2½	...	5.7
390	246⅛	AJ Bell	343⅜	+ 2¾	...	32.1
27075⅜	20168	Aon Corpn	25354⅜	+ 254	...	61.8
42¾	23	Appreciate Group♦	42⅛	...	...	18.3
1030	645	Arbuthnot Bkg♦	942½	+ 15	...	20.8
15½	11	Argo Group♦	11	...	...	5.0
286⅜	180⅞	Ashmore‡	234⅜	+ 3	...	7.9
1514¾	1144⅝	Aus New Z	1230⅛	+ 1	...	9.6
602⅞	373¾	**Aviva**	420	+ 6⅜	...	55.2
341½	193⅜	Banco Santander	297¼	+ 4¼	...	7.0
3000	1160	Bank of Georgia	2680	+ 75	...	8.3
189⅝	135⅝	**Barclays**‡	142	+ 4¾	...	3.4
⅜	...	Blue Star Capital♦	⅛	...	...	4.3
346	277	BP Marsh&Ptnrs♦	306	...	...	8.4
20½	6¾	Braveheart Inv♦	6¾	...	...	0.1
517	312	Brewin Dolphin	515	+ 1	...	28.1
365	173⅞	Bridgepoint	215⅜	+ 10⅜	...	13.4
80½	37	Cenkos Secs♦	37	– ½	...	7.5
325	262½	Chesnara	279½	– 1½	...	15.5
63½	9	City of Lon Gp♦	10	+ 1	...	-0.6
498	343½	City Lon Inv Gp‡	447	– 3	...	10.4
1214	894	Close Bros‡	898	+ 22	...	6.7
317	175⅜	CMC Markets	175⅜	– 2⅛	...	5.3
1055⅝	506½	Commerzbk	832	+ 8¾	...	42.6
1090⅝	671⅛	Deutsche Bk	804⅜	+ 19⅜	...	9.4
279½	135⅞	Direct Line Ins	135⅞	+ ⅞	...	5.6
58½	57	Downing ONE VCT	57	...	...	7.7
1⅛	⅜	Drumz♦	⅝	...	...	-5.6
162¼	64⅞	EFG-Hermes Hldg	64⅞	– 23½	...	4.1
255	122½	EPE Special Opps♦	167½	– 3½	...	9.3
1252¾	825⅜	FBD	1247⅛	...	...	5.5
72½	67½	Fiske♦	67½	...	...	12.0
78	59	Frenkel Topping♦	66½	...	...	38.6
840	548	Georgia Capital	773	+ 13	...	2.1
1005	682	Gresham House♦	682	– 13	...	27.3
506	320	H&T Group♦	422	– 4	...	13.5
51½	33	Hansard Global‡	46	+ ½	...	15.9
1059	740¾	**Hargreaves Lansdown**‡	784⅛	+ 16⅜	...	13.9
194⅞	143⅜	Helios Under♦	162½	+ 2½	...	...
647½	442⅛	**HSBC**‡	554	+ 12⅞	...	12.1
847½	648	IG Group	697	– 3	...	7.1
1036	500	Impax♦	800	+ 29	...	26.4
1829½	953⅛	Intermed Capital	1186½	+ 34½	...	6.8
114	64⅜	IPF	99⅞	– 1¼	...	5.6
173¾	136	International Public P'ship	141¾	– ¾	...	18.2
546⅜	351½	Investec	445⅞	+ 9⅞	...	11.2
320	253	Investment Co	295	...	...	10.6
96⅜	52¾	IP Group	54½	...	...	2.0
242½	94	Jarvis Securities♦	135	– 8	...	9.7
212½	83¾	Jupiter Fund Mgmt	132⅞	+ ⅞	...	4.9
95⅜	55⅞	Just Group	83¼	+ 1¾	...	...
664	368½	Lancashire Holdings	539	+ 9	...	...
284¼	204	**Legal & Gen**	236¾	+ 7⅛	...	7.2
...	...	Liberty Group	502⅝	– 2⅝	...	...
1308	704	Liontrust	1016	– 4	...	12.7
55¼	38	Livermore Invs♦	48	...	...	3.0
53⅞	39	**Lloyds Banking Gp**	47⅛	+ ⅝	...	6.5
36	24½	LMS Capital	24½	– 1	...	10.6
8582	6738	**Lond Stk Ex Gp**	7864	+ 70	...	80.4
226½	159⅞	**M&G**‡	185⅞	+ 6½	...	58.1
286¾	204¼	Man	246⅞	+ 5⅝	...	9.8
29	8	Manx Fin♦	23½	– 1	...	11.9
3¼	1	Marechale Cap♦	1	...	...	0.5
14503	11714⅜	Marsh McLn	13353½	+ 169¾	...	27.8
797½	530	Mattioli Woods♦	585	...	...	...
21¾	7½	Metal Tiger♦	8¼	+ ¼	...	3.1
153⅛	69	Metro Bank	103½	+ 3½	...	-0.7
1832⅛	1413⅜	Nat Aust Bk	1468	– 33⅝	...	14.5
309⅞	212⅜	**NatWest**‡	264⅛	+ 3	...	10.4
295	170⅜	Numis♦	210	– 6½	...	4.2
599	375⅜	Onesavings Bank‡	470⅛	+ 13	...	6.2
652	456½	PayPoint	456½	– 5	...	14.3
8½	¼	PCF Group♦	⅞	+ ¼	...	-0.4
684⅛	506¾	**Phoenix**	566¾	+ 17⅜	...	-6.5
321¾	136¼	Provident	225	...	...	4.2
1371½	797½	**Prudential**‡	1089	+ 44½	...	17.6
2⅞	⅞	Quantum Blockchain♦	1⅝	...	...	-9.3
173¾	80¼	Quilter	82⅛	+ ½	...	58.7
160⅜	57½	Randall & Quilter♦	71	– 1	...	...
2220	1570	Rathbone Grp	1884	+ 20	...	14.5
1⅛	½	RiverFort Global Opps♦	⅝	...	...	2.0
1955	1370	Rockwood Strategic	1820	...	...	2.6
2510	1905	S & U	2325	– 25	...	10.9
2	1	Sancus Lending Grp♦	1	...	...	-0.4
60¾	40¾	Schroder REIT	41¾	...	...	4.4
661⅜	358¾	**Schroders**‡	449⅜	+ 8½	...	2.0
1517½	920	**St James Place**	1187½	+ 19	...	22.6
790¾	479⅝	**Stand Chart**‡	603⅜	+ 9⅛	...	13.5
13½	7¼	Starvest♦	8	...	...	-1.3
29	22½	STM Group♦	28	...	...	10.7
4181⅛	3206¾	Sun Life Can	3723¾	+ 10¾	...	9.5
10	5¼	Tavistock Inv♦	6¾	...	...	1.1
2590	1040	TBC Bank Group	2245	+ 35	...	6.5
16¾	6¼	Tern♦	7	...	...	5.2
25¾	15¼	Time Finance♦	23¼	...	...	14.2
1200	900	Volvere♦	1200	+ 10	...	...
45	19½	WH Ireland♦	19½	...	...	10.9
33½	25½	Walker Crips Grp	25½	– ½	...	72.8
4265⅝	3019	Wells Fargo	3079¾	+ 59⅝	...	8.4
1344⅛	1046⅜	Westpac	1160⅛	– 8⅝	...	15.7
31	21½	Worsley Investors Ltd	29	...	...	90.9
40907¾	34563	Zurich Fincl	38110⅞	+ 565⅜	...	14.8

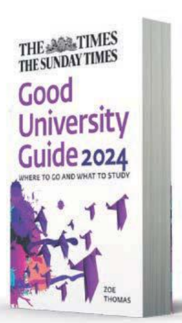
Investment companies

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld %	Dis(-) or Pm
1685	1042	**3i Group**	1658½	+ 48	...	-0.9
368½	281½	3i Infrastructure	310	...	...	-3.1
103	81	Abrdn Div I&G	81⅜	– ½	...	-28.7
1428	1066	Aberforth Smlr	1208	– 2	...	-12.8
1046	876	Alliance	957	+ 3	...	-6.3
461	352	Asia Dragon Tr	400	– 4	...	-12.1
244	183½	Athelney Trust	200	...	...	-5.7
206½	171¾	AVI Global Trust	183⅜	+ 1	...	-10.1
348	206¼	Baillie Gifford Ch Gr	262¾	+ 3	...	-10.7
111⅛	73½	Baillie Gifford Eu Gr	91⅞	+ 1	...	-14.1
860	657	Baillie Gifford Jpn Tr	741	+ 6	...	-9.8
179¾	131¼	Baillie Gifford SN	153½	+ 2⅛	...	-9.8
191	139⅜	Baillie Gifford UK Gr	162⅛	+ 2⅛	...	-14.7
109⅝	90⅞	Bankers	99¾	+ ¾	...	-9.3
5232	398¾	BH Macro	419	+ 1	...	3.2
1048	722¼	Biotech Growth	785	+ 4	...	-8.4
151	95	BlckRck Com Inc	124	– 1½	...	-2.2
144½	116½	BlckRck Fro Inv	131¼	– 1¾	...	-6.6
568	396	BlckRck Grt Euro	518	+ 4	...	-5.2
206	164	BlckRck Inc & Gwth	186½	+ 4½	...	-9.8
457	330	BlckRck Latin Am	345	+ 1½	...	-11.8
215	181	BlckRck SustAm	183¼	+ ¾	...	-6.8
1694⅝	1162	BlckRck Smlr	1282	+ 4	...	-13.3
767	477⅞	BlckRck Throgmorton	561	+ 5	...	-6.5
804⅞	524	BlckRck Wld Min	654	+ 10	...	0.3
18¼	4½	Blue Plan Int Fn#	7¾	...	...	-18.1
325⅞	256	CT Cap&Inc	288	+ 1	...	-2.8
124⅛	68½	Balanced Comm Prop	79⅜	+ 1	...	-33.8
162¾	122	The Glbl Smaller	140¾	+ ½	...	-13.9
506	375½	CT Priv Eq Ord	430	+ 7½	...	-40.4
101	60	CT Real Estate	60	...	...	-37.0
91¼	71	CT UK HIT	81½	– ½	...	-5.7
92¾	79	CT UK HIT B	84½	– ½	...	-2.2
356	294	CT UK HIT UNIT	323	– 2	...	-6.5
1335	1072½	Brown Advsr US Sm	1185	+ 15	...	-14.5
1115	888	Brunner	1045	– 10	...	-9.2
4065	3015	Caledonia Inv	3315	– 70	...	-32.2
184½	141	Invesco BondInc	160½	+ ¾	...	0.5
432	366½	City of Lon IT	407	+ 4	...	1.9
122⅞	83¼	Crystal Amber Fd	84½	– 1½	...	-31.7
580	454	Dunedin Entp	537½	– 20	...	-13.0
690	537	Edinburgh IT	652	+ 4	...	-6.9
230½	147¼	Edin Wwide	151½	+ 1	...	-17.8
336	268	EP Global Opp	324½	+ ½	...	-11.0
118	74½	European Assets	90⅝	+ 1	...	-8.6
780	608	European Opp Tr	743	+ 6	...	-14.3
989	769	**F&C Invest Tr**	901	+ 5	...	-2.8
536	413½	Fidlty Asian Val	504	...	...	-3.4
299⅜	181⅞	Fidelity China Sp	246	+ 2	...	-9.2
351	258½	Fidlty Euro Val	333½	+ 3½	...	-7.1
189½	143	Fidlty Jap Tru	172	+ ½	...	-11.3
298	232	Fidlty Spec Val	268	+ 2½	...	-7.2
899⅜	731¾	Fins Gwth & Inc	883	+ 8	...	-4.7
120⅛	83¾	GCP Infrastructure	84	– ½	...	-25.4
694⅞	552⅝	Gen Emer Mkts	584	+ 2	...	-14.8
55	28½	Gldn Prosp Prc Mtl	32¾	– ¼	...	-11.8
168½	130⅜	Greencoat UK Wind	153⅞	– 2⅛	...	-6.6
206⅜	166	Hansa Investment	174	...	...	-42.1
206⅜	167	Hansa Inv Co 'A'	175	...	...	-41.7
2650	1900	Hbrvest Glbl Pt Eq	2015	+ 10	...	-50.5
165½	120½	Hend Euro Foc	155	+ 2	...	-10.5
181	137¼	Hend High Inc	173	+ 4¼	...	1.2
1020	674¼	Hend Smlr	796	– 2	...	-10.2
1966	1540	Herald	1750	+ 14	...	-14.9
457½	310	HgCapital Trust	327½	+ 7	...	-29.3
184⅞	138⅞	HICL Infra	150	– ¾	...	-9.0
298	216	Highbridge Tactical	286	+ 7	...	7.7
1223¾	928	ICG Ent Tr	983	– 5	...	-48.4
486⅜	373⅛	Impax Env Mkts	411	+ ½	...	-3.2
374	280	Invesco Asia Tr	348½	+ 6	...	-9.5
184½	141	Invesco BondInc	160½	+ ¾	...	0.5
163¾	111	IPST Bal	139½	...	...	-9.3
258½	200	IPST Gbl Eq	238	...	...	-9.4
101	92	IPST Managed	95¼	...	...	-12.2
189	141	IPST UK Eq	156½	...	...	-13.7
546	373½	IP UKSmallerCos	429½	+ 4½	...	-11.4
800	650	JPM American	701	+ 10	...	-3.5
402¼	264	JPM Asia	369½	+ 7	...	-9.4
451½	246½	JPM Chinese	320½	+ 3½	...	-9.2
738	624	JPM Claverhs	658	– 6	...	-3.7
120⅜	91	JPM Em Mkts	108	+ ¾	...	-8.9
460½	339	JPM Euro disc	411½	+ 4	...	-15.1
142½	108	JPM GEMI	128½	+ ½	...	-10.4
481	386	JPM GG&I	448	+ 3½	...	1.2
898	719⅞	JPM Indian	768	+ 2	...	-18.1
384	301	JPM Jap Sml Co	319½	+ 1	...	-10.6
528¾	408½	JPM Japan#	468	+ 8	...	-8.7
1122	735	JPM Mid Cap	866	+ 12	...	-14.7
104	85¼	JPM Multi-Ass G&I	93¼	– 1	...	-3.2
-3.503	155	"JPM Em E	GBX	+ 103¾	...	...
345	230	JPM Smllr Co	258½	+ 1	...	-13.2
255⅛	174	Keystone IT	207	+ 1½	...	-15.6
871	649	Law Debenture	789	+ 7	...	1.3
136½	99	Lowland	124½	+ 1	...	-5.3
220¼	156¾	Majedie	210½	...	...	-14.0
358	272⅛	M Currie Port	330	+ 3	...	-1.6
120	90	Marwyn Val In	93½	...	...	-46.4
224	158¼	Mercantile IT	195⅛	+ 4⅛	...	-15.2
606	480	Merchants	563	+ 8	...	0.4
820	639¾	Mid Wynd	667	+ 2	...	-3.6
1138	875	Monks Inv Tst	946	+ 16½	...	-12.3
171	104⅛	Montanaro Eur Sml	135½	+ 1⅝	...	-11.8
903½	715	Murray Income Trust	842	+ 16	...	-6.8
1376	1128	Murray Int	1318	+ 4	...	-0.1
88½	70½	Nb Global Floating	71	– ¼	...	-10.4
384	303	Pacific Assets	355	+ 1	...	-6.2
325	229⅛	Pantheon Int	233	+ ½	...	-49.8
3115	2295	**Pershing Sq**	2750	– 15	...	-33.9
506	463¾	Personal Assets	475	– 1	...	-0.4
2300	1697½	Polar Cap Tech	1960	+ 20	...	-13.8
202	131	Prem Glb & Inf	134½	– ½	...	-17.4
148½	112½	Renewables Inf	122¾	– 2⅛	...	-7.1
2595	1792	RIT Cap Ptnr	1870	+ 18	...	-23.8
750	530⅜	Riverstone	580	+ 10	...	-52.4
469½	366½	Schroder TotRt	425½	– 1½	...	-4.2
552	446	Schrd Asia Pac	507	...	...	-10.5
324	254½	Schrod Inc Gwth	291½	– 1	...	-1.0
218	187	Schrod Jap Gwth	204	+ 3	...	-13.8
626	454	Schrod UKMid	560	+ 10	...	-10.2
26	11½	Schroder UK PP Tr	12	...	...	-57.1
536½	434	Scot American	495	+ 1	...	-3.7
1081¾	641½	**Scot Mtge**	658⅜	+ 15⅜	...	-21.2
242	205	Secs Tst Scot	213	+ 1½	...	-1.7
103¾	75½	Sequoia Eco	80⅜	+ ½	...	-14.7
249½	195⅛	Temple Bar	226	+ 2½	...	-6.1
166	130	Tplton Emg Mkt	150⅛	+ 2	...	-12.9
⅜	...	Tiger Royal and Inv♦	⅛	...	...	45.8
487½	263	TR Property	271	+ 7½	...	-11.4
78	64⅜	Troy Inc&Gth	69¾	– ½	...	-1.2
252	122	Utilico Ord	129½	+ 1	...	-41.1
227½	197½	Utilico Emerging Mkt	213½	+ 1½	...	-13.7
772	500	Vietnam Ent Inv	564	– 1	...	-14.9
237½	199¾	Witan	218½	+ 2	...	-10.0
3500	2820	Ww Health	3080	+ 20	...	-9.4

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Construction & property

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
206	133	Alumasc♦‡	155	– 1½	...	7.8
15¾	10⅛	Aseana Props	10⅞	– ⅜	...	-5.4
71¾	47¾	Assura‡	48⅛	+ ½	...	9.6
2¾	1⅜	Aukett Swanke♦	2¾	...	...	-3.9
373⅜	233	Balfour Beatty	373⅜	+ 2½	...	17.7
533½	323⅜	**Barratt Devs**	460⅛	+ 12	...	7.1
2728	1586½	Bellway	2187	+ 146	...	6.5
4457	3165	**Berkeley**	4147	+ 65	...	10.7
1558	987	Big Yellow Group	1124	+ 31	...	7.4
410	181½	Billington Hldgs♦	395	...	...	32.1
345	218	Boot (Henry)	225	...	...	12.0
543⅜	324¾	**Br Land**	374	+ 10½	...	51.2
160	120	Caledonian Tst♦	147½	+ 5	...	29.4
64¾	43¾	Cap & Regnl	56	– 1⅞	...	-0.4
2550	2120	Cardiff Prop	2370	– 30	...	25.7
25	2½	Carecapital♦	2½	– ¼	...	-0.3
170	106	Clarke T	134¾	+ ¾	...	9.6
291⅜	191⅝	Countryside Prop	229¾	+ 14	...	16.7
28⅜	6	Craven House♦	16⅝	...	...	-0.3
4353	2756½	**CRH**‡	3980	+ 27	...	16.5
3308	1876	Derwent London	2272	+ 70	...	10.1
4	3	Dolphin Capital♦	3¾	...	...	-2.6
36½	22	First Prop♦‡	23⅞	...	...	...
52½	37½	Fletcher King♦	37½	...	...	...
46⅝	27¼	Foxtons Group	40⅛	– ¼	...	...
185⅛	145	Galliford Try‡	172⅜	...	...	38.3
521	252½	Genuit Group	274	+ 5	...	16.6
640	335	Gleeson (MJ)‡	410	+ 18	...	6.4
1030½	630½	Grafton	873	+ 11½	...	10.1
312¾	205⅜	Grainger	224⅜	+ 2⅛	...	13.9
729	409⅛	Great Portland	477	+ 8½	...	-5.9
34⅜	17⅛	Hammerson	22¾	+ 1⅜	...	-2.4
185	101	Harworth Gp	113	+ 4	...	3.9
630	425	Heath (Samuel)♦	425	...	...	8.8
442	296½	Helical PLC	299½	+ 6	...	7.2
1065	875	Highcroft Invs	890	+ 5	...	3.8
208⅛	148¼	Ibstock	171⅜	+ 4⅜	...	22.2
251	176	James Halstead♦	185	+ 5	...	19.7
854	591	Keller	670	+ 10	...	7.7
8239	3966½	Kingspan Group	5314⅞	+ 71¼	...	20.8
806⅜	485¼	**Land Sec**‡	596½	+ 19⅜	...	...
103	58	Life Science Reit	58	– ¾	...	...
25	15½	Lon & Assoc	15½	...	...	-2.1
280⅜	161¾	Londonmetric Property‡	168¼	+ 4⅛	...	3.5
59	37	Macau Prop Op	58½	...	...	-7.5
689⅜	225⅜	Marshalls	297½	+ 8½	...	10.8
128	74	Michelmersh♦	94	+ 3	...	14.9
2480	1392	Morgan Sindall	1650	+ 42	...	8.0
13900	10800	Mountview	10800	...	...	13.4
99½	68¼	NewRiver REIT	79⅜	+ 1⅜	...	-2.7
297	195	Palace Capital‡	218	– 4	...	10.4
335	260	Panther Securities♦	260	– 5	...	2.3
2254	1138½	**Persimmon**	1236½	+ 35½	...	5.0
6¼	2¼	Pires Investments♦	2¼	...	...	-5.0
65	45	Plaza Cent	45	...	...	-0.1
151⅝	98⅝	Primary Health Properties	102½	+ 2	...	10.4
40½	28¼	Real Estate Invs♦	28½	...	...	3.7
585	372½	Redrow‡	471	+ 19⅜	...	5.8
1398	794	Safestore‡	915½	+ 19½	...	5.1
1190	763½	Savills	964½	+ 15½	...	9.6
6¼	5⅝	Secure Property♦	5⅝	...	...	14.8
1389	694	**Segro**‡	733	+ 17	...	2.1
44⅝	27¾	SIG	41¾	+ 1⅛	...	...
81	37⅜	SigmaRoc♦	51⅜	– 1¾	...	...
128½	66½	Sirius Real Estate	70	+ ⅛	...	5.4
173½	160½	Smart (J)	169½	– 2	...	4.6
50	28	Steppe Cement♦	43½	...	...	10.0
137¼	85	**Taylor Wimpey**	121¼	+ 3⅜	...	7.9
178½	129	Town Centre	140	– 4	...	5.5
1321½	738	Travis Perkins	950⅜	+ 11	...	9.2
248½	125⅝	Tritax Big Box Reit‡	133½	+ 2⅞	...	2.4
108⅜	57⅝	Tritax Eurobox	57⅝	+ ⅝	...	...
330	184½	Tyman	240	...	...	9.4
1207	791½	**Unite**	904	+ 21	...	10.5
983⅜	519½	Vistry Group	766	+ 32½	...	6.7
176⅛	92⅞	Warehouse REIT‡	92⅞	+ 1¾	...	2.1
722	343⅜	Workspace Grp	431⅜	+ 9½	...	-6.4
755	630	Wynnstay Props♦	630	...	...	4.5

Consumer goods

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
6¾	1	Agriterra♦	1⅛	...	...	-0.1
39½	25½	Airea♦	38	...	...	14.0
952	740	Anglo-Eastern	802	– 18	...	7.3
340	147½	Animalcare♦	157½	+ ½	...	...
2067	1237	**AB Foods**	1943½	– 8½	...	32.1
121	79	Bakkavor Group	105	...	...	10.9
588	432	Barr (AG)	505	– 4	...	17.9
4½	1½	Bidstack Group♦	1⅞	...	...	-1.6
106½	24½	Brand Architekts♦	28½	+ ½	...	-1.2
3628	2875	**Brit Amer Tob**‡	2875	– 6	...	9.7
883½	707½	Britvic	883½	+ 13½	...	20.0
2592	1482	**Burberry**	2455	+ 47	...	21.1
212½	140⅝	C&C Grp	153⅜	+ 4⅜	...	-9.1
8½	2⅛	Capital Metals♦	4⅛	...	...	-1.1
153	92	Carr's Grp#	121½	...	...	15.0
614	363	Character Grp♦	370	...	...	6.6
1525	1070	Churchill China♦	1225	+ 5	...	...
2214	1548	**Coca Cola HBC**	2214	+ 29	...	17.7
880	595	Colefax♦‡	770	...	...	13.6
3748	2586	Cranswick	3010	+ 48	...	15.9
328½	164	Devro	328	...	...	17.8
4020½	3410½	**Diageo**‡	3559	+ 8	...	27.3
1¾	⅜	Distil♦	⅜	...	...	11.8
1085	784	Evans (M.P.)♦	900	+ 40	...	7.7
103½	66½	Finsbury Food♦‡	96	...	...	11.4
9515	5690	Games Workshop	9380	+ 170	...	25.8
1185½	857⅞	Glanbia‡	1185½	+ 8¾	...	29.2
135⅞	60¾	Greencore	82¼	+ 1¼	...	16.4
396	231	Headlam	301	– 1	...	12.9
1250	500	Hilton Food	669	+ 1	...	13.9
36	24	Hornby♦	24½	...	...	...
2185	1610½	**Imperial Brands**‡	1906	+ 12	...	6.3
1⅝	1¼	J Lewis Hford♦	1½	...	...	9.1
9611½	7372¾	Kerry Gp	8084½	+ 146	...	22.4
44	15½	McBride	26½	...	...	-4.7
310	205	Mulberry Group♦	215	...	...	8.9
1460	986½	Nichols♦‡	1107½	+ 2½	...	...
270	165	Norcros	185½	– ½	...	5.8
386⅝	300¾	Origin Ents♦	373⅞	...	...	11.8
66½	21	Pittards♦	21	...	...	9.9
610	300	Portmeirion♦	370	...	...	15.7
1	⅝	Provexis♦	¾	...	...	0.4
221	170⅜	PZ Cussons‡	184½	– ⅜	...	21.2
200½	98½	REA	99¾	...	...	-7.8
2⅜	1	Real Gd Fd♦	1⅛	...	...	0.1
500	235	Tandem♦	252½	– 2½	...	3.6
1158	507	Treatt	593	+ 2	...	23.8
3¼	1¾	Ukrproduct Gp♦	3¼	...	...	-2.2
4876½	4039	Unilever (NV)	4782	– 11	...	24.5
4267½	3370	**Unilever**	4207	– 6	...	21.6
926	317	Victoria♦	480	– 8	...	...

Engineering

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
...	...	Ass Br Eng#	15	...	...	-3.5
1381	739	Avon Rubber	904½	+ 4½	...	...
367½	268½	Babcock	305½	+ 2	...	-1.8
986⅜	713	**BAE**	986⅜	– 1½	...	18.0
2150	1600	Braime A N/V♦	2100	...	...	23.6
1750	1480	Braime Group♦	1700	– 50	...	19.1
602½	500	Caffyns	525	– 25	...	7.6
5¾	1⅝	Cap XX Ld♦	1⅝	...	...	-3.6
380	279	Castings	332	+ 2	...	16.0
5	3¼	Chamberlin♦	3¼	– ⅛	...	-0.2
42	14	Checkit♦	28	– 1	...	-3.4
560	391	Cohort♦	467	– 12½	...	41.5
400	167½	Crestchic Plc♦	399	...	...	...
1410	1020⅜	Dewhurst♦	1060	+ 35	...	12.1
371	193¼	Dialight	197¼	+ 4	...	...
1291⅝	907¼	Electrolux 'B'	927¾	+ 14¾	...	7.0
182½	85½	Feedback♦	157½	...	...	...
1025	426	Gooch Hsego♦	448	+ 7	...	33.1
3930	2400	Goodwin‡	3735	+ 35	...	20.6
2578	1876½	**Halma**	2166	+ 38	...	31.3
1548	893	Hill & Smith	1346	+ 18	...	31.6
125	71½	Holders Tech♦	76	...	...	4.6
2¾	¾	Image Scan♦	1¾	...	...	10.5
1625	1071	IMI	1515	+ 18	...	20.7
...	...	Inspirit Energy♦	...	...	...	...
9600	6500	Judges Scientific♦	8800	+ 150	...	44.4
85	71½	LPA♦	85	...	...	...
798¾	760⅛	Meggitt	798¾	+ ⅛	...	...
165¾	95½	**Melrose**	164⅜	+ 2⅛	...	...
325	217	Morgan Advanced	285	+ ½	...	12.0
534	227½	Mpac♦	235	– 5	...	6.1
745	260	MS Intl♦	565	+ 35	...	80.7
2625	1720	Oxford Inst	2485	+ 35	...	33.9
2556⅞	1072⅜	Philips El nv	1366⅝	+ 43⅝	...	24.3
28½	12¾	PipeHawk♦	13½	– ¼	...	28.7
101½	23⅛	Pressure Tech♦	44	...	...	-3.6
4338	3342	Renishaw‡	4112	+ 64	...	23.4
29	20	Renold♦	26	– ¼	...	9.2
158	66⅛	**Rolls-Royce**	148	+ 2⅝	...	...
1¾	⅞	Ross Gp	⅞	...	...	-2.1
337½	229½	Rotork	308¾	+ 3⅜	...	33.5
200	144	SDI Group♦	175½	+ 2	...	28.9
173⅜	111	Senior	159	+ 2	...	27.7
70⅛	48	Severfield	60½	+ ⅛	...	10.8
16¼	8	Six Hundred♦	8½	...	...	49.7
1708⅜	1146¾	SKF B	1529⅜	+ 20⅝	...	11.3
300	175	Slingsby (HC)♦	300	+ 30	...	4.9
1797½	1364	**Smiths**	1681	+ 14	...	26.7
1435	986	Solid State♦	1062½	...	...	25.6
512	350	Somero Enter♦	362½	...	...	8.0
3644	2474	Spectris	3575	+ 80	...	11.7
12995	9130	**Spirax-Sarco**	11545	+ 130	...	36.3
57½	28½	Surface Trsfms♦	28½	– 3½	...	...
3½	1½	Tanfield♦	3⅛	+ ⅛	...	-9.0
472	345	Thorpe FW♦‡	370½	+ 7½	...	25.7
2⅝	⅝	TP Group♦	2⅛	...	...	-3.3
95½	48½	Transense Tech♦	84½	...	...	62.1
3500	3070	Ultra Electrncs	3500	+ 6	...	37.4
435	284½	Vesuvius	404⅛	+ 4⅜	...	10.7
1530	833	Videndum	863	– 16	...	15.8
323½	204	Volex♦	205	+ 1½	...	11.1
2021	1328½	**Weir**	1811½	+ 39	...	30.6
3620	1464	XP Power‡	2005	+ 9	...	10.7
182½	111¼	Zytronic♦	140	...	...	46.6

Health

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
1475	1049	Abcam♦	1226	+ 123	...	...
316	220	AdvancedMedical♦	220	+ ½	...	34.5
26	5	Allergy Therap♦#	6¼	+ 1¼	...	-7.3
156	16½	Angle♦	16½	– ½	...	-2.2
603	212½	Anpario♦	212½	+ ½	...	11.1
11802	9656	**AstraZeneca**	11166	+ 32	...	...
38⅜	29	Circassia Group♦	34	...	...	34.0
248½	199	**Convatec**	220	– ½	...	51.3
64	25⅜	Creighton	33½	...	...	6.4
4272	2520	Dechra Pharma‡	2614	+ 8	...	39.0
1¼	¾	Deltex Medical♦	1	...	...	-6.4
26⅞	13¾	e-Therapeutics♦	14¼	– ¼	...	...
165	82½	Eco Animal Hlth♦	97½	– 1	...	11.8
54⅜	25½	EKF Diagnostics♦	30½	+ 3⅜	...	8.6
56⅞	24⅝	Futura Medical♦	44½	+ 2	...	...
3272	2234	Genus‡	2800	– 36	...	49.8
1828½	1296	**GSK**‡	1420½	– ⅜	...	16.4
¾	¼	Gunsynd♦	¼	...	...	3.1
335¾	246⅛	**Haleon**‡	323⅜	+ 2⅜	...	...
2122	1190½	Hikma Pharms‡	1645	+ 13½	...	12.3
335	134½	Hutchmed China♦	221½	+ 2½	...	...
...	...	Immunodiag Sys♦	378	...	...	...
7¾	1½	ImmuPharma♦	2⅛	...	...	-0.6
7025	1349	Indivior	1373	+ 6	...	78.6
112½	47½	Inspiration Health♦	49½	...	...	7.6
41½	20½	IXICO♦	20½	– 1	...	6.5
501½	343¾	Mediclinic	498	+ ⅛	...	31.1

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
3¾	1½	N4 Pharma♦	1⅝	...	...	-1.9
7792⅞	6564¾	Novartis	7332⅜	-41½	...	9.3
5⅝	2¼	Omega Diags♦	3	...	...	-1.2
14	4¾	Ovoca Bio♦	5¾	...	...	-1.6
697	297	Oxford Biomedica	418½	-5	...	18.8
5	2	Physiomics♦	4⅛	...	...	...
5	3¼	Proteome Scies♦	3⅝	...	...	...
6808	5450	**Reckitt Benckiser**	6156	+22	...	...
63½	31⅜	RUA Life Sciences♦	54	...	...	-5.2
295	70	Sareum Hldgs♦	87½	...	...	...
1321½	984½	**Smith & Neph**	1120½	-12½	...	25.4
250	203	Spire Hcare	205½	-2	...	...
35	8⅛	Synairgen♦	8⅛	+⅜	...	-0.3
⅝	⅜	Tissue Regenix♦	½	...	...	-7.1
47½	16¼	Totally♦	16¼	+⅝	...	25.7
420	292	Tristel♦‡	327½	...	...	67.5
34¼	8⅞	ValiRx♦	10½	+¼	...	...

Industrials

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
148	54⅜	Accsys Tech♦	63⅛	+1⅛	...	...
4864½	3433⅝	BASF	4150⅞	+69⅞	...	8.1
5986½	4190⅝	Bayer DM50	5038⅝	+35⅛	...	58.8
235	46½	Biome Tech♦	83	...	...	-2.7
3⅝	1½	Byotrol♦	1⅝	...	...	...
7	6¼	Camb Gbl Timber♦	6¾	...	...	-9.0
81⅜	50⅞	Coats Grp	73½	+¾	...	16.4
8028	5908	**Croda**	6494	+114	...	28.3
1250	612½	Cropper (James)♦	612½	+2½	...	18.6
129	87⅝	Elementis	115	+1½	...	...
33½	11½	Hardide♦	11½	...	...	-2.2
2373	1784	**Johnson Math**	1953½	+18	...	24.6
1705	1266	**Mondi**	1304½	-5	...	9.9
100	75	Robinson♦	97½	...	...	...
368½	241¾	**DS Smith**	310⅞	+2½	...	17.6
746⅜	446⅝	Swire Pacific	618¾	-5⅛	...	...
21½	9¼	Symph Environ♦	9¼	...	...	...
332¾	88	Synthomer	116	+6½	...	2.4
2727⅞	2164	Takeda Pharm	2678⅜	+49	...	15.0
7	3¼	Velocys♦	3½	...	...	-4.5
1931	1545	Victrex	1636	...	...	19.4
651	450	Wynnstay Group♦	450	-2½	...	10.3
410	233	Zotefoams	388	...	...	23.3

Leisure

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
224⅛	52½	888 Hldgs	52½	-1⅞	...	3.8
850	542	Accesso Tech♦	690	+22	...	18.1
680	370	Best of the Best♦	555	...	...	6.2
1396½	501⅜	Carnival	700½	+36	...	-1.1
140	99	Celtic♦	115	...	...	11.3
34¼	1⅞	Cineworld	2⅝	+⅛	...	...
384½	215⅛	Domino's Pizza	277¾	+3⅜	...	14.1
1688½	1075½	**Entain**‡	1206	+34½	...	26.9
14380	7614	**Flutter Ent**	14380	+235	...	...
33⅜	22	Gaming Realms♦	25⅝	-¼	...	...
290	290	Heavitree♦‡	290	...	...	17.4
185	65	Heavitree A♦‡	110	+10	...	6.6
145	120	Hermes Pacific♦	120	...	...	...
5784	4193	**InterContinental Hotels**	5204	+68	...	48.7
1¼	⅞	Minoan Gp♦	⅞	...	...	-6.3
243⅜	102	Mitch & Butlers	162⅛	+1⅛	...	...
247½	92½	On The Beach	137⅜	+2	...	-7.2
1600	1020	PPHE Hotels	1140	+10	...	-9.2
141¾	52⅜	Rank Grp	74	+6¾	...	10.0
69¼	26⅝	Restaurant Gp	40⅛	+⅛	...	-7.5
50½	28	Rotala♦	46	...	...	...
37¼	15½	Sportech♦	19	...	...	...
277⅞	184¾	SSP	242½	+6	...	-4.7
5¾	2½	Tasty♦	2½	-⅛	...	3.5
295	65	Tintra♦	100	+5	...	-1.7
2493	704⅜	Tui	704⅜	+2⅜	...	-7.3
3⅜	1⅛	Webis Holdings♦	1¾	...	...	...
819½	389¾	Wetherspoon JD	700	+21	...	-6.5
3151	2285	**Whitbread**	2886	+31	...	...
1470	870	Young & Co - A♦	1040	-30	...	...
818	564	Young & Co - N/V♦	679	-25	...	...

Media

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
⅝	⅛	7digital Gp♦	⅝	...	...	-5.7
87½	52½	Aeorema Comms♦	71½	+3½	...	19.7
47½	20½	Altitude Group♦	47½	+1½	...	...
85½	70½	Arcontech Grp♦	79½	...	...	11.0
348	176⅛	Ascential	242	-1¾	...	...
675	486⅛	**Auto Trader**	593½	+7½	...	29.2
492	350	Bloomsbury Pub	455	+½	...	18.7
8	3¼	Bonhill Group♦	4¾	...	...	...
172½	53½	Catalyst Media♦	157½	...	...	...
¼	⅛	Catenae♦	⅛	...	...	-0.2
...	...	Daily Mail‡	270	-2½	...	10.3
195	100	DCD Media♦#	100	-30	...	5.0
71½	43	Ebiquity♦	51½	...	...	...
1466	910	Euromoney In Inv	1460	+2	...	...
2770	1081	Future	1094	+17	...	18.8
1400	930	GlobalData♦	1235	-10	...	61.1
112⅛	50	Hyve Group	112	+⅜	...	...
190½	46½	IG Design Grp♦	190½	+1½	...	27.9
697	501¾	**Informa**	673¾	+10	...	...
90	55⅛	ITV	81¼	+1½	...	8.7
10¼	4⅛	Jaywing♦	4⅛	-⅝	...	...
12¼	1¾	Live Company Gp♦	1⅞	...	...	-0.3
...	...	Mediazest♦	...	...	...	-6.0
47½	26½	Merit Grp♦	30	...	...	-8.9
57½	21½	Mirada♦	21½	...	...	-0.9
68½	42	Mission Group♦	55	...	...	9.3
255¾	167	Moneysupermarket	255¾	+11½	...	26.1
1863⅜	1213¼	News Corp A	1360½	+12⅛	...	22.2
1883⅝	1239¼	News Corp B	1370¾	+10⅞	...	22.3
1458	755	Next 15 Comms♦	866	+6	...	...
995⅛	734½	**Pearson**‡	820¾	-4⅛	...	39.2
107	65⅛	Photo-Me	107	+5	...	18.6
4⅜	2	Primorus Inv♦	3½	...	...	6.4
187½	108½	Quarto	150	...	...	8.3
195⅜	67	Reach	70⅞	+⅜	...	78.7
1⅞	¾	REACT Grp♦	1	...	...	15.3
2605	2081	**Relx**	2592	+23	...	34.2
663	445⅜	**Rightmove**	551⅛	+9¾	...	31.1
150	65	SpaceandPeople♦	80½	...	...	...
332	247	STV Group	251	-1	...	6.1
310	122½	System1 Group♦	162½	...	...	7.7
3345¼	2286¼	21st Cent Fox Inc A	2687⅞	+26¾	...	14.7
3069⅜	2156⅜	21st Cent Fox Inc B	2470⅛	+22¾	...	13.5
...	...	Vela Tech♦	...	...	...	4.6
356	222	Wilmington‡	296	...	...	18.8
1073½	725¾	**WPP**	944⅛	+25⅛	...	17.9
123½	77½	Zinc Media♦	87½	...	...	-5.5

Natural resources

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
1	⅜	ADM Energy♦	⅝	...	...	...
¼	...	Advance Energy♦#	⅛	...	...	-0.1
41⅜	17¾	AFC Energy♦	20¼	+¼	...	...
...	...	Afentra PLC	...	...	...	...
⅛	...	Alba Mineral Res♦	...	...	...	-2.3
⅞	⅜	Alien Metals♦	⅜	...	...	...
111¾	66¼	Alumina	78⅛	+¼	...	16.2
1¼	⅝	Aminex	1	...	...	-6.3
2	⅝	Amur Mins Corp♦	1⅝	...	...	...
941257⅝	4514⅜	Anglo Amer Plat	4514⅜	-113	...	3.2
4170½	2479	**Anglo American**‡	2634	+66½	...	5.2
118	64	Anglo Asian Mng♦	116	-5	...	10.0
1805	991½	**Antofagasta**	1557	+23	...	16.1
5¼	2⅞	Arc Minerals♦	3¼	...	...	2.4
4¾	2½	Ariana Res♦	2⅞	...	...	3.9
¾	⅜	Arkle Resources♦	½	...	...	-1.8
4½	1⅜	Armadale Cap♦	1⅜	...	...	...
2¼	⅞	Asiamet Rsrcs♦	1	...	...	...
410	188	Atalaya Mine♦	340	-1	...	4.2
¼	...	Baron Oil♦	⅛	...	...	...
11¾	1⅞	Beowulf Mining♦	1⅞	...	...	-8.2
⅛	...	Bezant Res♦	...	...	...	-1.3
3019	2034	BHP Group‡	2457	+46½	...	10.7
6⅞	1½	Border & Sthn Pet♦	2⅝	+⅛	...	...
43½	14⅛	Bougainville	17	...	...	...
4¾	1¼	BowLeven♦	1¼	...	...	-1.5
567½	363⅞	**BP**‡	510½	+2⅝	...	18.5
19¼	8¾	Cadence Min♦	10⅛	...	...	1.0
3½	1⅝	Cadogan Petrol	2⅛	...	...	29.8
1280	825	Caledonia Mining♦	1235	+60	...	12.0
261¾	194⅜	Capricorn Energy	231⅜	-⅜	...	1.8
8⅜	2¼	Caspian Sunrise♦	6⅛	...	...	...
125½	74⅜	Centamin	101¼	+¾	...	15.7
292½	207	Cent Asia Metals♦	239	-12½	...	7.0
19½	9⅜	Chaarat Gold♦#	10⅞	...	...	...
23⅞	12	Chariot Oil & Gas♦	14	-⅜	...	...
6¼	1¼	China Nonferr Gold♦	2	...	...	...
⅝	...	Clontarf Energy♦	⅛	...	...	-2.5
35¾	15¼	Condor Gld♦	23¼	+¼	...	...
1½	⅛	Corcel♦	¼	...	...	-0.3
7120⅛	77⅝	DRD Gold	77⅝	+1¼	...	9.1
1⅝	½	ECR Minerals♦	½	...	...	-3.7
22	5¾	Edenville Energy♦	5¾	-⅝	...	-0.3
11¾	⅝	Empyrean Energy♦	1⅛	...	...	-7.9
2068	1461	**Endeavour**	1917	+34	...	28.5
36½	16¾	EnQuest	17⅞	-⅜	...	1.1
13½	3½	Eurasia Mining♦	3½	-⅛	...	...
3	⅞	Europa Oil&Gas♦	1	...	...	10.0
195¼	97½	Ferrexpo	116⅝	+3½	...	0.9
968	644	**Fresnillo**	728½	+9½	...	17.2
...	...	G3 Exploration#	28	...	...	-2.6
41½	19¼	Galantas Gold♦	19¼	...	...	-3.2
7¼	3	GCM Resources♦	3	...	...	-2.5
72⅞	25⅛	Gem Diamonds	25⅛	-1¾	...	2.6
32⅞	12⅛	Getech♦	13⅞	...	...	-3.3
578	400	**Glencore**	465½	+6⅝	...	17.0
⅝	¼	Global Petrol♦	¼	...	...	-3.4
107949½	1078⅞	Gold Fields	1078⅞	-3⅝	...	16.6
12½	6¾	Goldplat♦	8⅛	-½	...	6.1
10⅜	2½	Goldstone Res♦	2½	...	...	...
14¾	7	Greatld Gld♦	7½	+¾	...	...
120½	70	Griffin Mining♦	76	+1	...	8.3
310	145	Gulf Keystone	145	-13	...	9.0
25⅞	5⅝	Harland & Wolff Gp♦	13⅞	+⅝	...	1.1
147⅛	51½	Hochschild	79	+1	...	7.6
173	85	Horizonte Minrls♦	138	-1½	...	...
356½	187½	Hunting PLC	233	+1½	...	-5.9
106½	15¾	IGas Energy♦	16⅜	-⅝	...	-0.8
½	...	Independ Res♦	...	...	...	...
317	214	Indus Gas♦	214	-5	...	22.2
1	¼	Ironveld♦	¼	...	...	-5.0
379¼	74¼	ITM Power♦	74¼	+4⅞	...	...
17	7⅛	Jubilee Metals♦	7¾	-⅛	...	6.4
3¼	1⅝	Karel Diamd Res♦	1⅝	...	...	-6.8
1¼	½	KEFI Gold and Copper♦	¾	...	...	-3.4
526	380½	Kenmare Res	477	-2½	...	5.5
31¼	5¾	Lamprell#	8⅞	...	...	-0.7
23¾	11⅞	Landore Res♦	13¼	+⅝	...	-3.0
⅝	⅜	Lansdowne O&G♦	⅜	...	...	...
18½	12½	Leeds Group♦	12½	...	...	-2.0
6⅜	1⅞	Lexington Gold♦	5	...	...	...
21½	2¾	MC Mining♦	9¼	...	...	-1.9
1¾	¾	Metals Explorn♦	1¾	...	...	2.9
⅝	⅛	Nostra Terra♦	⅛	...	...	-1.3
26½	⅛	Nostrum O&G	10½	-1½	...	...
...	...	Oil Search	218⅞	-5⅜	...	60.3
¼	⅛	Oilex♦#	⅛	...	...	-3.7
¼	...	Oriole Resources♦	...	...	...	-1.1
⅞	½	Ormonde Mining♦#	¾	...	...	-3.1
17⅛	5¾	Orosur Mining♦	8	-⅛	...	...
24	12¾	Pan African Res♦	16⅛	+⅛	...	5.2
149½	23½	Pantheon Res♦	23¾	-½	...	...
79	36	Parkmead Grp♦	39⅛	+⅜	...	-3.3
⅝	⅜	Pathfinder Mins♦	⅜	...	...	-3.1
134	71	Petra Diamonds	75	...	...	2.5
4	1¼	Petrel Resources♦	1¼	...	...	-6.6
5⅜	1⅝	Petro Matad♦	3½	...	...	...
157⅞	49	Petrofac	49	+3	...	-1.2
1¾	¼	Petroneft Res♦	¼	...	...	-0.9
4⅞	⅞	Petropavlovsk#	1⅛	-⅛	...	1.6
7½	3¾	Phoenix Global♦	6½	+¼	...	-1.6
5⅞	1⅝	Plexus Holdings♦	3	-⅛	...	-0.7
350	166	Polymetal Intl	240	+16	...	...
698	499	Porvair	634	+22	...	24.3
19¼	3⅝	Prospex Energy♦	8	+¼	...	...
16½	8½	Proton Motor Power S♦	9¾	-¼	...	-1.7
4	1¾	Providence Res♦	3¼	...	...	29.0
2¾	1	Quadrise Fuels Intl♦	1½	-⅛	...	-5.8
30¾	3½	Rambler Met&Min♦#	5⅜	+¼	...	0.1
⅜	⅛	Reabold Resources♦	⅛	...	...	-3.4
⅝	⅛	Red Rock Res♦	⅛	...	...	-1.1
7003¼	4786⅝	Rio Tinto Ltd	6253⅛	+40⅛	...	6.5
6377	4486	**Rio Tinto**‡	5393	+55	...	5.6
41⅛	19⅞	San Leon Energy♦	26¾	+1¾	...	10.0
½	⅛	Scirocco Energy♦	¼	...	...	...
59	22½	Serabi Gold♦	30¼	-¼	...	4.1
450	207½	Serica Energy♦	223	+1	...	...
12½	8½	Shanta Gold♦	12⅛	-¼	...	7.7
2604½	1936⅜	**Shell**	2298	+35	...	12.1
2⅞	⅞	Sound Energy♦	1½	...	...	9.6
⅛	...	Sunrise Resources♦	...	...	...	-9.4
¼	...	Tertiary Minerals♦	⅛	...	...	-3.5
⅞	¼	Thor Mining♦	¼	...	...	-1.7
5409	3921¾	Total Eng SE	4731⅛	+14⅞	...	10.8
¼	⅛	Tower Resources♦	⅛	...	...	-2.7
61	27½	Tullow Oil	29¼	...	...	2.9
⅛	...	UK Oil & Gas♦	...	...	...	-2.0
460	135	URU Metals♦	150	...	...	4.8
1⅞	⅛	Vast Res♦	½	...	...	-0.1
4	3¾	Victoria Oil&Gas♦#	3¾	...	...	-1.8
2⅝	2⅝	W Resources♦#	2⅝	...	...	-0.3
5¼	2⅛	Westmount Engy♦	2¼	-⅛	...	-0.4
251⅝	104½	Wood Grp (J)	201⅜	+9¾	...	-8.2
8	1	Woodbois♦	1	...	...	4.1
6⅞	1¼	Xtract Resources♦	1¼	...	...	-2.3
7⅝	4	Zephyr Energy♦	4½	...	...	-5.8

Professional & support services

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
5090	2240	4imprint Grp	4910	+10	...	82.8
555	460	Andrews Sykes♦	545	...	...	17.4
5874	3359	**Ashtead**	4832	+57	...	23.5
29½	1½	Asimilar Group♦	2¼	...	...	0.1
137½	58	AssetCo♦	60½	-½	...	0.3
53½	37	Avisen♦	47½	...	...	...
148	106	Begbies Traynor♦	131	+6½	...	...
228	155	Blancco Tech♦	187	...	...	67.0
3163	2575	**Bunzl**	3014	+12	...	22.8
42⅝	20⅛	Capita	37½	+⅛	...	2.8
45	37	CEPS♦	37	-2½	...	-8.3
130	105	Christie Group♦	115	...	...	48.9
2008	1576½	**Compass**	2000	-4	...	48.6
267	97	CPPGroup♦	226	+7	...	...
81½	49½	Croma Security♦	49½	...	...	7.1
6268	4030	**DCC**	4502	+110	...	14.8
115⅜	52	De La Rue	55⅞	+1	...	7.3
2970	2158	Diploma	2728	+26	...	48.8
914	597	Discoverie	775	+25	...	63.5
40	23½	Driver Group♦‡	28½	...	...	13.5
335	175⅛	Essentra‡	187	+9½	...	21.0
3160	2285	**Experian**	2604	+36	...	33.4
12380	8680	Ferguson‡	10635	-20	...	15.7
270	215	FIH Group♦	269	...	...	...
11	5¼	Grafenia♦	9¼	...	...	-6.8
610	317	Hargeaves Serv♦‡	400	-9	...	4.1
735	413	Impellam Grp♦‡	622½	+2½	...	34.0
28⅛	4	Ince G♦#	5⅛	+⅛	...	2.9
5344	3619	**Intertek**	3976	+31	...	22.3
272	115⅜	IWG	152½	+4	...	-5.8
122	77	Johnson Srvce♦	121	+1¾	...	75.6
167½	99	Journeo♦	167½	+9	...	37.5
89	56½	Kier Gp	67¾	+3¼	...	6.6
1400	1080	Latham (J)♦	1162½	-2½	...	6.3
1080	695	Lok'n Store♦	746	-17	...	22.6
3850	2300	Lon Security♦	3050	...	...	16.8
403	220	LSL Prop Services	271	-3	...	7.5
131	86	Macfarlane	106¾	+¾	...	12.3
335	102½	Maintel Hldgs♦	115	...	...	3.5
2200	8¼	Malvern Intl♦	12½	...	...	...
224	182	Mears Group	197	+1½	...	17.1
608	565	Menzies (John)	607	-1	...	48.0
83⅞	51	Mitie Gp	80⅜	+¾	...	40.2
13¾	3¾	MobilityOne♦	7¾	...	...	5.7
55	25	Newmark Sec♦	49	...	...	...
7	3½	Norm Broadbent♦	5¼	...	...	-9.9
64½	38½	Northern Bear♦	38½	...	...	3.9
286	198	NWF Grp♦‡	247	...	...	...
519½	362⅛	PageGroup	450⅛	+2⅜	...	12.1
73	46	PCI-PAL♦	49½	...	...	...
13	8¼	Petards♦	10½	...	...	19.0
26½	13	PHSC♦	13½	+½	...	24.5
2⅞	⅞	PowerHouse Egy♦	⅞	...	...	-1.6
98	61	Record	84	+1½	...	23.0
439½	283½	Redde Northgate	343½	+5	...	8.6
750	555	Renew Hldgs♦	672	+2	...	16.6
851	489	Renewi	600	+12	...	12.6
572⅛	445	**Rentokil**	572⅛	+5¾	...	40.5
472	282	Restore♦	282	-5	...	33.5
581	331½	Ricardo‡	545	-2	...	48.6
700	440	Robert Walters	476½	-5½	...	10.9
20	11½	Roebuck Food Grp♦	17¾	...	...	2.7
239	95⅜	RPS Group	221	-1	...	...
1159	812	**RS Group**	894	+8	...	22.6
28½	16	RTC Group♦	16	-½	...	...
445	264⅜	RWS Hldgs♦	295	+⅛	...	27.0
440	365	Science Group♦	396	+4	...	18.2
188¼	139¾	Serco	154	+⅛	...	6.3
57½	27½	Smiths News	49⅜	+¾	...	4.8
3596	2452	**Smurfit Kappa**	2899	+38	...	13.2
64⅛	32½	Staffline Gp♦	36	-⅜	...	27.6
484½	317½	SThree	422	+1	...	13.6
137½	95	Synectics♦	115	...	...	...
34½	21⅝	Thruvision Group♦	24	...	...	-8.7
94¼	36¾	Tribal♦	36¾	+¾	...	11.5
92½	49	Vianet♦	74	...	...	...
980	660	Vp	660	-19	...	16.2
2⅞	1	Westminster♦	1¼	...	...	-1.6

Real estate

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
177⅞	95½	Shaftesbury Cap	110	+3⅝	...	32.3

Retailing

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
95½	37⅞	AO World	62¾	-⅜	...	...
580½	295½	**B&M European**	469½	+4⅝	...	10.9
42⅝	20¼	Brown (N)♦	28⅛	+⅝	...	8.2
102⅛	40⅜	Card Factory	85⅞	+1⅞	...	...
2122	1549	CVS Group♦	1803	-23	...	50.5
214	104¾	DFS Furn	129½	+2½	...	6.8
1275	670½	Dunelm‡	1112	...	...	14.9
949½	600	**Frasers Group**	760½	+10½	...	33.8
2820	1673	Greggs	2744	+38	...	24.0
271¾	124⅝	Halfords	170	-⅜	...	5.6
796¾	480⅞	Howden Joinery	682⅜	+9⅜	...	12.8
941	647	Inchcape	752½	+48	...	25.4
4⅞	1⅝	IQ-AI	2¾	...	...	-7.8
186⅝	89⅛	**JD Sports**	168⅛	+⅜	...	20.3
291½	203	**Kingfisher**	255⅛	+4	...	6.4
97½	61½	Lookers	80¾	+½	...	5.2
165¼	93⅛	Marks & Spencer	159⅝	+⅞	...	...
12	6	Mothercare♦	8¼	-⅝	...	-5.1
397½	75½	Naked Wines♦	104	+4¼	...	...
7076	4383	**Next**	6434	-292	...	12.2
1244	393	**Ocado**	478	+34	...	...
28¾	14⅞	Pendragon	14⅞	-1	...	4.6
396	257¾	Pets at Home	362⅜	+¾	...	14.7
258	72⅞	Saga	126⅝	+4⅝	...	...
271⅛	169⅞	**Sainsbury's**	267¾	+3	...	22.5
1714	1132½	WH Smith	1449	+27½	...	...
30½	14¼	Sosandar♦	22½	+¼	...	...
2¼	1¼	Stanley Gbbns♦	1½	...	...	-1.6
...	...	Studio Retail#	115	-2½	...	2.4
156	69½	Ted Baker	109¾	...	...	...
286⅝	199⅛	**Tesco**	262½	+7½	...	13.3
57½	38	Topps Tiles	46½	-⅜	...	8.4

Technology

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
108	62½	Access Intell♦	79½	...	...	...
143	25½	Aferian plc♦	25½	-2¼	...	4.5
187	126	Alfa Financial	135	+2	...	21.1
21⅛	8¼	Allied Minds	13¾	+3⅛	...	-1.2
430	290	Aptitude Software	367	-3	...	41.2
265	126½	Bango♦	212½	-2½	...	...
53⅞	21	BATM Adv Coms	23⅜	+1½	...	9.8
34	14¼	Berkeley Res	19¾	+1	...	-8.4
21½	8⅛	Blackbird♦	8½	-½	...	...
1⅝	¾	CloudCoCo Group♦	1	...	...	-2.6
2968	1810	Computacenter	2064	+4	...	12.8
96	65½	Concurrent Tech♦	72½	...	...	17.2
14½	6¼	Corero♦	6¼	...	...	...
2250	1155	Craneware♦‡	1155	-15	...	52.6
3	1¾	Crimson Tide♦	2½	...	...	17.0
24	11¼	CyanConn Hldgs♦	16¾	-½	...	...
287½	212½	D4t4 Solutions♦	212½	-10	...	25.1
⅛	...	DeepMatter Gp♦	...	...	...	-0.1
22½	13	Dillistone Group♦	18½	...	...	-5.3
1	⅛	EQTEC♦	⅛	...	...	-2.2
1108	599	FDM Group	754	-7	...	26.1
16¾	9	Filtronic♦	12	-⅛	...	32.4
2450	1230	First Derivts♦	1698	+4	...	...
647	298⅛	GB Group♦	298⅛	-2	...	22.7
180½	136	GreshamTech	160	+5	...	...
143½	24¼	Ilika♦	36	...	...	...
132½	77½	Ingenta♦	123½	...	...	72.2
77	38	Intercede♦	62½	...	...	21.5
200	112	Iomart♦	126⅛	+¾	...	13.8
59⅞	25¼	IQE♦	26¾	+⅛	...	...
156	112½	K3 Business Tch♦	112½	...	...	-1.9
1980¼	1055	LG Electronics‡	1478⅜	...	...	3.9
¼	⅛	Location Sciences♦	⅛	...	...	-2.5
532	256¼	Micro Focus Intl	532	+½	...	-5.6
70½	45	MTI Wireless♦‡	51½	...	...	17.1
55¾	20⅜	Nanoco Gp	20⅜	+¼	...	...
108½	52	Netcall♦	97	-2	...	...
62½	41	Northamber♦	41½	...	...	...
38½	10¼	Online Blockchain♦	19½	...	...	...
112½	76½	Oxford Metrics♦	99½	+1	...	43.2
9	5½	Parity♦	5½	...	...	-7.9
41½	28½	Pennant Intl♦	37	...	...	...
619½	390¾	Playtech	511½	+3½	...	5.3
394⅛	299⅜	QinetiQ	324¾	-2⅜	...	25.3
150	20½	RM	70	+5	...	14.0
817⅛	595½	**Sage**	748½	+3¾	...	28.7
8¼	5¼	Seeing Machines♦	5¾	...	...	...
139	86	Shearwater Grp♦	86	...	...	53.2
77½	31½	Smartspace S'ware♦	37½	...	...	-3.9
1755	1071	Softcat	1255	+37	...	24.6
286⅛	168	Spirent Comms‡	175⅜	+4½	...	16.3
54	24¾	SRT Marine♦	43	+1	...	...
728⅞	440¾	Tele. Ericsson	450	+5⅞	...	8.2
90	72½	Touchstar♦	82½	...	...	...
1055	860	Tracsis♦	895	+15	...	...
20½	12¼	Trakm8♦	14½	+½	...	...
145	81	Triad Grp	137½	+2½	...	15.0
1380	222½	Wandisco♦#	1310	...	...	...
925	415	Water Intel♦	425	+2½	...	23.3
273	144½	Xaar	193	+4½	...	...
10	¼	Yourgene♦	¼	...	...	-0.2
207½	101½	Zoo Digital♦	197½	-2½	...	...

Telecoms

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
199	100	AdEPT Technology♦‡	199	+1½	...	...
170⅞	106⅞	**Airtel Africa**	106⅞	+1⅝	...	9.5
196½	112	**BT Group**	141¾	+2	...	13.7
100¼	53½	Currys plc	56¾	+2⅝	...	2.6
1382	1012	Gamma Comms♦	1066	-4	...	19.3
144¼	100¼	Helios Towers	106	+3½	...	-9.5
3009	1103½	Just Eat T'away	1491⅛	+23¾	...	-3.2
¼	...	Mobile Streams♦	⅛	...	...	-1.7
2¼	⅝	Mobile Tornado♦	1¾	...	...	...
2500	1500	Telecom Plus	1926	+42	...	49.3
132⅛	83⅝	**Vodafone**	89¾	+⅞	...	...

Transport

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
340	226	Braemar Ship	302½	+5½	...	10.0
591¾	285	EasyJet	492⅛	+16	...	-3.1
11½	4½	Esken Limited	4¾	...	...	-0.2
139½	93½	FirstGroup	104½	+2½	...	24.8
407	251	Fisher (James)	293	+4½	...	-5.3
173½	93⅝	**International Airlines**	143	+2¾	...	-3.1
361	183⅛	IDS	225⅝	+3⅜	...	2.5
439¼	304	Irish Cont Uts	399	-32	...	...
1381½	667¾	Jet2♦	1291½	+21½	...	-6.9
272½	117⅜	Natl Express	121½	+⅝	...	-7.2
1050	820	Ocean Wilson	900	+10	...	4.5
106⅛	104	Stagecoach	104⅝	...	...	14.7
24	19½	Sutton Harbour♦	22	...	...	...
424	192⅜	Wincanton	209	+5	...	5.6
3256	1357½	Wizz Air	2734	+84	...	-6.2

Utilities

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
107½	67¼	**Centrica**	104	+2	...	10.5
258	188¾	ContourGlobal	251	+½	...	28.3
831½	473⅜	Drax Group	574½	-6½	...	42.5
617½	457	Jersey Electricity	457	-2	...	8.6
1245½	858⅜	**National Grid**	1073½	+3	...	25.0
9¾	5⅝	OPG Power♦	8¾	...	...	5.6
1113	755	Pennon‡	862	+20	...	62.4
⅝	¼	Rurelec♦	¼	...	...	-0.2
3211	2213	**Severn Trent**	2843	+50	...	...
1920	1428	**SSE**	1737½	+27	...	6.7
1176½	828⅛	**United Utilities**	1047	+15½	...	96.0

♦AIM company; # Price at suspension; † Ex dividend; ‡ Ex scrip; ▲ Ex rights issue; ▼ Ex all; § Ex capital distribution; * figures or report awaited; . . . No significant data. Companies in bold are constituents of the FTSE 100 Index. Investment Cos sector Nav Dis or Prm supplied by Morningstar.

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Architect who made her mark with Tate St Ives
Eldred Evans
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Register

Obituaries

Paul O'Grady

Altar boy turned comedian and primetime television presenter who based his drag queen creation Lily Savage on real-life characters

Lilian Mae Veronica Savage was the daughter of an improvident Irishman and a no-holds-barred female wrestler from Liverpool known as "Hellcat Savage". At the age of three, Lily's mother told her, "I'm not having a ginger-haired baby, get on that dye," and she grew up to be a foul-mouthed prostitute and shoplifter with a mountain of peroxide hair, turning dark at the roots and accessorised with fake furs, junk jewellery and lethal stilettos.

At least that was the biography Paul O'Grady invented for his drag queen, who proved so popular in the comedy clubs and pubs that he gave up his day job as a social worker to promote her talents full time.

As with most great comic characters, there was something of real life in O'Grady's creation. His mother's maiden name was Savage and Lily was derived from the nickname "Shanghai Lil", conferred on him at a dockside party with a gang of Chinese sailors in Liverpool. Other elements of her personality drew on characters he had met while spending a year working in a Manila brothel that masqueraded as a bar, and on female relatives he had observed while growing up on Merseyside. It is not recorded whether "Auntie Chris", whom he singled out for special mention, was flattered or offended.

O'Grady gave Lily her first outing in 1978 when the compere at a pub cabaret evening failed to turn up. Lily stepped in and O'Grady later took her on tour as part of a drag duo called the Playgirls.

By the early 1980s he was working solo and spent eight years performing as Lily at the Royal Vauxhall Tavern, a popular gay club in south London. However, it was not until O'Grady took her on holiday to the Edinburgh Fringe for the first time in 1988 that Lily began to achieve national recognition. She became a regular visitor and in a stellar year for stand-up, in 1991, O'Grady was shortlisted along with Jack Dee, Eddie Izzard and Frank Skinner for the Perrier Award as the festival's funniest act.

Shortly afterwards, Lily was hired by Newham council to launch its policy on gay rights and O'Grady remained a forthright and eloquent advocate on LGBT issues.

With Lily's language toned down for a mass audience, O'Grady transferred to television, taking over as a presenter of *The Big Breakfast* from Paula Yates. In addition to her own TV shows *Live from the Lilydrome* and *Lily Live!*, as Lily he fronted *Blankety Blank* for five years, guest presented *Top of the Pops* and appeared on Radio 4's *Woman's Hour*.

O'Grady also gave Lily a number of sisters, playing Nancy, Dickens's original "tart with a heart", in a London Palladium production of the musical *Oliver!* and a transvestite prostitute police informant named Roxanne in ITV's *The Bill*.

At the height of the scare over Aids, to which O'Grady lost several close friends, Lily was featured on a series of posters promoting safe sex. She also appeared in ad campaigns for the Ford Escort and Pretty Polly tights but O'Grady came to believe he had created a monster and disliked being stereotyped as a drag queen. He pointed out that when Barry Humphries was playing Dame Edna Everage, he was "never called a drag act because he's a heterosexual male … but I'm called one because I'm a gay man. It's homophobic and it's wrong, as there is nothing remotely sexual about what I do. I dress up as a woman for financial purposes, nothing else."



PRESS ASSOCIATION

As Lily Savage in 1993 and below, O'Grady and his daughter Sharon at Buckingham Palace in 2008 after he was made MBE

In the early years of the new millennium he began to emerge from behind the wig and make-up to present TV shows in his own name, starting with *Paul O'Grady's Orient*, a Michael Portillo-like show in which he travelled on the Orient Express, and *Paul O'Grady's America*, a six-part travelogue in which he chased wild alligators in the swamps of Louisiana and took a tiger for a walk in Texas.

He claimed to have sent Lily to a Brittany convent to repent of her sins

There was some scepticism as to whether his adult humour was adaptable for a pre-watershed audience when in 2004 ITV gave him his own daytime chat show. Yet he made the transition with aplomb and *The Paul O'Grady Show* was soon beating Channel 4's daytime show *Richard & Judy* in the ratings, launching a rivalry that the tabloids called the "Chat Wars".

The show won O'Grady a Bafta and a Royal Television Society award for best daytime programme and led to Channel 4 poaching him on a contract of £2 million a year to present the renamed *The New Paul O'Grady Show*. By 2009 he was back at ITV on an £8 million deal to host a Friday primetime chat-show.

After the death of Cilla Black he took over a reboot of *Blind Date* and he spent 13 years presenting a Sunday afternoon show on BBC Radio 2. "I only came to do a few hours as a stand-in for Elaine Paige and look what happened," he said when he stood down in 2022.

His enjoyment of shocking the self-appointed guardians of morality never left him and his suggestion that he wanted to see the heads of David Cameron and George Osborne "on spikes on Tower Bridge" provoked outrage. Nor was he amused when one national newspaper suggested he had matured into a "national treasure".

Nevertheless, he became establishment enough to be appointed an MBE and for Queen Camilla to appear in 2022 on his long-running TV show *For the Love of Dogs* in an episode to mark the anniversary of the Battersea Dogs & Cats Home, for which he was an ambassador.

Whether he liked it or not, the public still hankered after seeing him back in drag. He refused to bring Lily out of retirement and claimed to have sent her to "a convent in Brittany" to repent of her sins, but one of his final performances came playing Miss Hannigan in a tour of the musical *Annie*. "She's either hungover or drunk," he said. "When she's hungover, that's when she's evil, but I play her as a happy drunk. I have rollers in my hair and the lippy is smeared so you can tell she's pissed."

He is survived by Andre Portasio, a Brazilian ballet teacher whom he married in 2017, and by a daughter, Sharon, from a casual relationship in his late teens. He was previously in a 25-year relationship with Brendan Murphy, his business partner and manager. It was Murphy who told him to take care of one particular point of business: to legally divorce Teresa Fernandes, a Portuguese barmaid whom O'Grady had married in 1977 in order to prevent her deportation. The pair had become friends after meeting in a gay club. "I had no idea we were still married until Brendan said: 'If anything happened to you, everything would go to your wife.' It's like a real-life *Corrie* storyline."



It was on Murphy's death of cancer in 2005 that O'Grady decided it was also time for Lily Savage to be interred. "Because he's always been here with Lily, I thought, 'I can't do it any more,' so she died with him," he said.

The youngest of three children, Paul James O'Grady — or Padraic Seamus O'Grady according to his Irish passport — was born in 1955 in Birkenhead, Merseyside and grew up in a rented home in Tranmere. His arrival into a devoutly Catholic family was unexpected. His brother and sister had both been born more than a decade earlier in the Second World War and his parents, Patrick and Molly, spoilt him. Visits to his father's family farm in Ireland fostered a love of animals.

As a seven-year-old he posed as deaf and mute in order to get his name on television, submitting a painting to the BBC children's show *Vision On*. When his mother found out she made him go to confession. An altar boy until he was dismissed for laughing during a funeral service, he failed the 11-plus and was educated at the Blessed Edmund Campion Secondary Modern and Corpus Christi High School. On leaving school at 16, he drifted through a variety of jobs as a DHSS clerical assistant, a barman and in an abattoir before he became a care worker in a home for disabled children. On moving to London he took up a similar role with Camden social services, until he was torn away by Lily Savage.

Over the years he had suffered three heart attacks, which he attributed to smoking 40 a day, but ill health largely failed to slow his prolific work rate until a severe case of Covid last year. In addition to his own shows there were cameos in programmes from *Holby City* to *Birds of a Feather*, half a dozen books and tireless work for animal charities.

At his farm in Kent, which he bought more than 20 years ago from his fellow comedian Vic Reeves, he kept sheep, pigs, goats, donkeys, ducks, chickens and geese. There was also a dovecote, the female inhabitant of which he described as "a trollop who smashed her eggs, attacked her husband and went off with a wood pigeon". Two of his dogs, Buster Elvis Savage, and Olga, became canine celebrities via appearances on his shows and he won an RSPCA animal hero award for his "outstanding contribution to animal welfare".

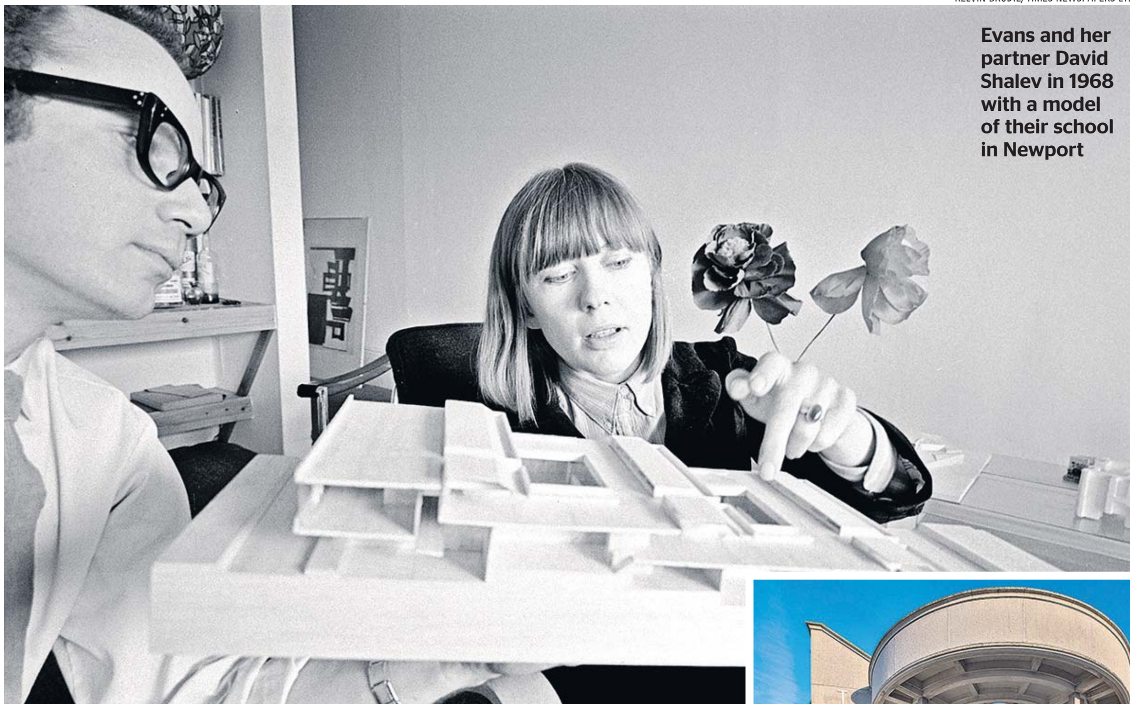
The demands of looking after his menagerie were a rude awakening. "I felt really stressed and thought, 'What have I done?'" he admitted. Yet he came to love country life as a refuge from the pressures of work and paparazzi outside his London flat.

"When I'm in the countryside, I look like Worzel Gummidge," he said. "Friends come down and they recoil in horror. It's called letting yourself go, and I'd highly recommend it."

Paul O'Grady MBE, comedian, was born on June 14, 1955. He died unexpectedly on March 28, 2023 , aged 67

Eldred Evans

Architect and contemporary of Norman Foster and Richard Rogers at Yale who eventually made her mark with Tate St Ives



KELVIN BRODIE/TIMES NEWSPAPERS LTD.

Evans and her partner David Shalev in 1968 with a model of their school in Newport



Yale's class of '62 is best remembered as the creative crucible that forged Britain's most famous architects, Norman Foster and Richard Rogers. However, Rogers conceded that there was a brighter British star in the firmament that year in the form of Eldred Evans.

Before she could prove it by coming top of the class, Evans left the course and returned to Britain to steal a march on her British Yale contemporaries by opening an office to deliver her competition-winning design for a civic centre in Lincoln. The early brutalist project of a council chamber, shops and magistrate's court set in a pedestrian precinct was subtly respectful of its historical setting and competition assessors called it "outstanding".

The 24-year-old appeared to have a glittering career ahead — Rogers called her a "goddess" — only for the scheme to be cancelled. Evans, whose high cheekbones were framed by a razor-sharp bob and who wore svelte black outfits and sunglasses like an acolyte of the jazz and philosophy scene on Paris's Left Bank, consoled herself by spending the prize money on a second-hand vintage Rolls-Royce and moved on in style.

She was not destined to shape the British and international landscape with her buildings in the prolific way that Foster and Rogers would. She and David Shalev, her partner in life and architecture, could claim with some justification to be Britain's unluckiest practice. Over the years they would enter 60 design competitions and win 18. Yet by the late 1980s their only big project, a school in Newport, south Wales, was slated for demolition. A strong character who gave her opinions freely and eloquently, she believed that they had been marginalised for many years because she was a woman and he was Israeli.

Then she had a change of luck. Truro Courts of Justice, opened in 1988 and now grade II listed, was the practice's first significant building in 12 years. A year later she finally won a commission that would secure her a lasting and celebrated legacy. The project was to build a gallery overlooking the sea for Tate St Ives in Cornwall, home to a celebrated artists' colony since the early 19th century and where her father, the famous Welsh artist Merlyn Evans, had often painted. The gallery is sited on a spit of land going out to sea and its spaces are circular in plan with openings in the roof that take advantage of natural daylight flowing in from all directions. Sitting intensely in a plume of Dunhill cigarette smoke, Evans agonised over every curve in a wall to maximise the light that dropped deep into the space. Tate St Ives opened in 1993 and attracted 120,000 visitors in its first six months, some 50,000 above target. Millions have visited since.

She tried to persuade her student Nick Mason not to tour with Pink Floyd

Eldred Ann Oliver Evans was born in London in 1937 to Merlyn Evans and Phyllis, née Sullivan, also an artist. When she was a child the family emigrated to South Africa, where her father taught. Eldred attended school in Witwatersrand and then returned to London to live with her father, now divorced from her mother.

Eldred had drawn from an early age and her draughtsmanship was admired at the Architectural Association (AA) in London, where she was the outstanding student of her year.

In 1964 she agreed to look after Shalev, an Israeli architect visiting London and friend of her fellow former AA students Ada and Ram Karmi. They soon founded Evans & Shalev. The couple married in 2001. He died in 2018. She is survived by their daughter Elantha, an architect.

The disappointment of the Lincoln scheme was banished in 1967 when she and Shalev wowed a panel of judges, including the great modernist James Stirling, to win a competition to design Bettws High School, in Newport, Gwent. Opened in 1972, Evans's brutalist concrete blocks might have looked forbidding but the plan was ingenious, breaking up the large comprehensive school into a series of smaller, more friendly interiors with their own dining spaces and external courtyards so as to make the school seem less impersonal.

Like many brutalist buildings of the Seventies, the school was poorly maintained and aged badly. It was finally demolished in 2003, despite a campaign to have it restored, grade II listed and found a different use.

Evans and Shalev kept their practice deliberately small, working in an old shop in Belsize Park, north London, furnished with Alvar Aalto chairs and Eileen Gray tables. She approached architecture with the same design purity and rarely compromised. One completed project in the Seventies was a home for disabled young people in Alexandra Road, Camden Town, London, which opened in 1976 and was much loved by residents.

By the Eighties Evans and Shalev's aesthetic was evolving into a more contextual, sculptural modernism, incorporating classical elements, although she firmly resisted the postmodernist label that became trendy at that time. Whatever it was called, it hit the zeitgeist. They defeated the challenges of a cramped site and tight budget to prescribe glass bricks and classical columns that helped to make Truro Courts of Justice in Cornwall a calm and elegant series of spaces, in which three courts were sited around a naturally lit atrium. The law courts won the Riba building of the year award (the precursor to the Stirling Prize) in 1988.

They went on to design the Quincentenary Library (1995) and student residences (2000) for Jesus College, Cambridge. It was Evans's favourite project, redolent of a classical brick villa and showcasing her virtuosity with detailing and furniture (also designed by Evans) inspired by Charles Rennie Mackintosh. One of her and Shalev's final built projects was the Bede Museum in Jarrow, using classical motifs that somehow did not look out of kilter with the Anglo-Saxon artefacts.

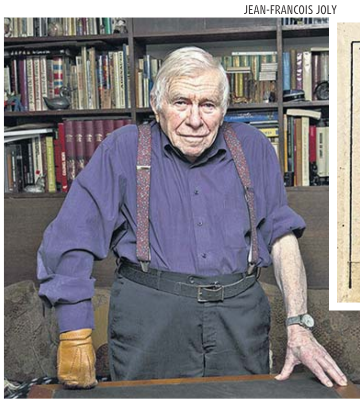
In recent years Evans returned to Tate St Ives to oversee a refurbishment of the gallery and give input on an extension to double its size owing to public demand. The gallery reopened in 2017 and was shortlisted for the Stirling Prize in 2018. She herself painted abstract miniatures in watercolour and acrylic, exploring an eclectic range of subject matter including still life, sporting events, interiors, town, sea and skyscapes.

Before her late flourishing as an architect, she had relied heavily on teaching. Some students found her brusque, but most soon realised that she cared deeply. One of Evans's most promising students at the Regent Street Polytechnic (now the University of Westminster) in the late 1960s was Nick Mason, who told her one day that he was quitting the course to go on tour with his band, Pink Floyd. Her emphatic response demonstrated her lifelong devotion to her craft: "You're mad!"

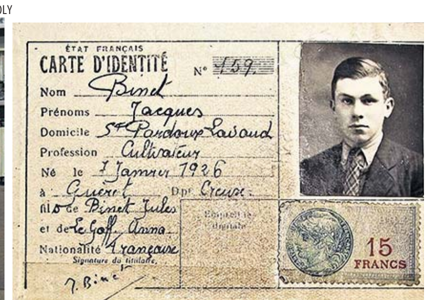
Eldred Evans OBE, architect, was born June 16, 1937. She died of undisclosed causes on November 6, 2022, aged 85

Jacques Bloch

French resistance fighter who was wounded during the liberation of Guéret and later survived the Buchenwald death marches



JEAN-FRANCOIS JOLY



Bloch in 2019, and his false identity card. He ate grass on a "death march" from Buchenwald, and managed to flee

Jacques Bloch was 19 when he joined the French resistance, disguising himself as a farmer and using the pseudonym Jacques Binet. His responsibilities included helping to guide in Allied parachute drops for the Maquis in the Creuse region of central France. On June 8, 1944, two days after the D-Day landings in Normandy 300 miles to the north, he was part of a maquisard force that liberated the town of Guéret, driving out the German 22nd SS Panzer Division.

During the fighting Bloch was hit by machinegun fire. A surgeon declared that his arm needed amputating but the procedure was barely complete when German reinforcements arrived and retook Guéret. "I was in the soup, not in a state to be transported," he told Le Monde. "The hospital promised to hide me, but I was reported by a militiaman and arrested."

Spared summary execution, the prisoner was taken east to Montluçon, where he was interrogated by the Gestapo. After eight days his arm was seen by a military doctor, who protested at the condition of his wound. "I'm ashamed to be German," the doctor declared, ordering nurses to treat him. His next destination was Moulins, where he was incarcerated in the castle of the dukes of Bourbon, which had been converted into a prison, using old socks to bandage his still-infected arm. He was then put on the penultimate transport out of the city to Buchenwald concentration camp in Germany.

Bloch described his arrival: "We were stripped naked and our hair was cut off. We were then completely immersed in a huge tank filled with Crésyl [an antilice disinfectant] … For eight months I never saw a piece of soap and I never changed my underwear." He would not give up: "People who lost hope collapsed and disappeared within days."

With Allied forces approaching in April 1945, the Germans used "death marches" to disperse the Buchenwald prisoners to other camps. Those who collapsed were shot. With no food, Bloch resorted to eating grass. Yet he and a comrade managed to escape, wandering through the fields until stumbling across American forces near Eisenberg. He now weighed less than 34kg (about five stone).

Jacques Gustave Bloch was born into a Jewish family in Paris in 1924, one of three children of Marc-André Bloch, a teacher who had served with the French artillery during the First World War, and his wife Germaine (née Ettinger). At the outbreak of war his father was remobilised but was captured in June 1940. He was released the following spring in a German act of clemency for First World War veterans but lost his teaching job for being Jewish. Two days later the family home was seized.

Arriving in Creuse in early 1942, they were supported by the historian Marc Bloch, his father's cousin. Bloch Jr recalled a Jewish star appearing above his bed at school. Confident of the perpetrator's identity, he drew a swastika on the other boy's bed. He passed his baccalaureate in 1943 and applied to become a doctor but Jews were banned from studying medicine. Marc Bloch, who introduced father and son to the resistance, was killed by the Nazis in June 1944.

After the war Bloch returned to Paris. He was awarded the Resistance Medal by France in 1946 but otherwise received no official support. Giving up his plans to be a doctor, he studied law and became an administrative officer in the Senate, the upper house of the French parliament. He married in 1946 and had four children. The marriage was dissolved and in 1969 he married Josette.

Bloch returned to Buchenwald in 1995 for a Radio 4 programme about Jacques Lusseyran, his friend from the camp. Until 2017 he made an annual pilgrimage to Guéret to commemorate the town's liberation. At his Paris apartment, he kept a tin box with "souvenirs" of captivity: a red cloth triangle bearing the letter F for his nationality; another with his prisoner number, 85235; and a dried flower from the death march.

Jacques Bloch, French resistance fighter, was born on July 7, 1924. He died on January 28, 2023, aged 98

Hans Modrow

Last Communist prime minister of East Germany, who was unable to slow the gathering momentum for reunification

There was a time in the 1980s when Hans Modrow was seen as the man who could save East Germany. While the Communist state's gerontocratic elite seemed incapable of change, Modrow was dubbed the "East German Gorbachev", a reformer in the mould of the Soviet leader. Protesters against the regime chanted "Modrow, Modrow" alongside "Gorby, Gorby". He was rumoured to be Moscow's choice to replace the ageing East German leader Erich Honecker. "Torchbearer of the reform hopes of many East Germans" was one admiring description in the western media.

Modrow had been treated with suspicion by the East German leadership for some time, kept in a role as Communist boss in Dresden rather than in the capital. In some ways he had toed the party line as holes began to appear in the Iron Curtain. He cracked down on demonstrations at the railway station in Dresden as thousands tried to join trains full of East Germans who had entered the West German embassy in Prague and secured the right to emigrate to the West.

But Modrow had also encouraged dialogue with opposition groups and was admired by many for his charm and modest approach. He lived in an ordinary flat in Dresden rather than in the luxurious accommodation used by most in the Communist hierarchy.

As protests spread, Modrow began to speak more openly about the need for change, saying that without new leaders the country was lost. In November 1989, after Honecker was deposed and the Berlin Wall fell, he was finally given his chance, appointed prime minister in a new government headed by Egon Krenz. While Krenz soon disappeared with most of the Communist hierarchy, Modrow retained power for five months.

In some respects he embraced the speed and depth of change, beginning talks with opposition groups preparing for free elections, securing the arrest of Honecker on corruption charges and joining the West German leader Helmut Kohl in symbolic moments such as the reopening of the Brandenburg gate, a potent symbol of a reuniting Berlin.

However, Modrow's hopes of reconstituting East Germany as a reformist socialist state were swiftly overrun by the desire for more radical change and the power of the West German state to push for full reunification.

He faced constant political challenges. He had himself fiercely criticised the East German parliament for having "done no work" during the decades of Communist domination; now its membership asserted itself vigorously.

He wanted to pass new laws protecting what he saw as vital citizens' rights. One was passed enabling citizens to buy the land on which their housing was located, reversing land expropriations that had taken place immediately after the end of the war. Overall though, he complained later, legislation took too long to pass.

PATRICK HERTZOG/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



Modrow, right, with Helmut Kohl, the West German leader, in 1989

In the meantime social and economic developments were undermining the East German state with brutal speed. Thousands more left for the West, leaving businesses in the East without employees and leading to panic buying and shortages as supplies failed.

Modrow had met Kohl in Dresden in December 1989, and sensed in the adulation with which the West German leader was greeted the growing popular pressure for German unity. Modrow still believed in a longer-term process, however, and spoke of preparing a "co-operation treaty" between the two German states leading to a kind of confederation. When he went to Moscow in January 1990, Mikhail Gorbachev made it clear that he would not stand in the way of German reunification. Modrow began to concede that such unity was now coming, but he aimed to attach conditions, such as an insistence that the new Germany be neutral rather than a Nato member.

He was widely seen as a reformer and drew comparisons with Gorbachev

A second meeting with Kohl in February 1990 revealed how much weaker Modrow's position had become. "A steamroller meets a lame duck" was one headline. Modrow requested urgent economic aid but Kohl proposed instead swift moves towards a currency union. Modrow, who had asserted that "I am emphatically against leaving the solution of the national question of the Germans to the deutschemark alone", knew how difficult it was to resist the attraction of a new hard currency to millions of German Democratic Republic (GDR) citizens.

In the first free East German elections in March 1990, Modrow led the campaign for the former Communists, now called the Party of Democratic Socialism. The party won only 16 per cent of the vote. The victors were conservative parties pressing for swift reunification and Modrow was replaced as prime minister by Lothar de Maizière, a close ally of Kohl. De Maizière, complained Modrow, simply handed over the GDR to West Germany. Germany was reunited later that year as a Nato member and the country in which Modrow had made his political career ceased to exist.

Hans Modrow was born in 1928 in Jasenitz in Pomerania (now in Poland), the son of a baker. As a 17-year-old he was recruited into the Volkssturm, a military unit comprising mostly the very young and the very old, mobilised in a desperate attempt to defend the Third Reich. He was taken prisoner by the invading Soviet army and sent to an anti-fascist re-education camp.

Returning to what was now the Soviet-occupied zone of Germany and then the GDR, he worked as a machine tool fitter before beginning a swift rise in the Communist hierarchy via its youth movement, the FDJ.

He married Annemarie Straubing, who died in 2003. They had two daughters, Irina Modrow, a historian who died in 2017, and Tamara Singer, a writer, who survives him.

Modrow built his reputation as a more liberal figure in Dresden as pressure grew for change.

After his brief period in high office ended in 1990, he was a member of the new German parliament until 1994, and was later in the European parliament.

In 1993 he was found guilty of electoral fraud during elections in Dresden in 1989 and given a suspended sentence.

Among his publishing projects was a book based on his battle to obtain access to files held on him by the West German intelligence services, the BND, which ironically also revealed how the Honecker government's Stasi secret police had spied intensively on Modrow.

Looking back, Modrow sought to defend the GDR as "neither paradise nor hell", a much more generous assessment than many would have made. There was wider agreement, however, about the role of Modrow and others in preventing the extreme uncertainty after the fall of the Wall from turning into violent chaos. "We have had a revolution in the streets without bloodshed," he once said. "I am proud that we achieved these changes without loss of life."

Hans Modrow, Communist politician, was born on January 27, 1928. He died on February 11, 2023, aged 95

obituaries@thetimes.co.uk

Court Circular

Hotel Adlon Kempinski Berlin
29th March, 2023

The King and The Queen Consort left Royal Air Force Brize Norton this morning for the State Visit to Germany.

Their Majesties were received at the Airport by the Lord Parker of Minsmere (Lord Chamberlain) and His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Oxfordshire (Mrs Marjorie Glasgow).

The King and The Queen Consort this afternoon arrived at Berlin-Brandenburg Government Airport and were received by His Majesty's Ambassador to the Federal Republic of Germany (Her Excellency Mrs Jill Gallard), the Ambassador from the Federal Republic of Germany to the Court of St James's (Mr Miguel Berger), Mrs Dörte Dinger (State Secretary of the Federal President's Office) and Mr Till Knorn (Chief of Protocol of the Federal Foreign Office).

The King and The Queen Consort drove to the Brandenburg Gate and were received by The President of the Federal Republic of Germany and Mrs Büdenbender.

His Majesty inspected the Guard of Honour.

The King and The Queen Consort, with The President of the Federal Republic of Germany and Mrs. Büdenbender, subsequently walked through Pariser Platz before departing by car for Bellevue Palace, Berlin.

The King later attended a Sustainability Reception at Bellevue Palace and planted a tree for The Queen's Green Canopy in the Palace Garden.

The King and The Queen Consort were entertained this evening at a State Banquet given by The President of the Federal Republic of Germany and Mrs Büdenbender at Bellevue Palace.

The following are in attendance: the Rt Hon James Cleverly MP (Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs), the Rt Hon Sir Clive Alderton, Mr Christopher Fitzgerald, Mrs Jennifer Jordan-Saifi, Mr Tobyn Andreae, Professor Charles Deakin, Dr Douglas Glass, Lieutenant Colonel Jonathan Thompson and Mrs Sophia Densham.

St James's Palace
29th March, 2023

The Princess Royal this morning visited Adnams Brewery, Sole Bay Brewery, East Green, Southwold, to mark its One Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary and was received by Mr Robert Rous (Vice Lord-Lieutenant of Suffolk).

Her Royal Highness later opened the Centre for the Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science's new Headquarters, Pakefield Road, Lowestoft, and was received by His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Suffolk (Clare, Countess of Euston).

The Princess Royal, Patron, Friends of Happisburgh Lighthouse, this afternoon visited Happisburgh Lighthouse, Lighthouse Lane, Happisburgh, and was received by Major General Sir William Cubitt (Deputy Lieutenant of Norfolk).

Her Royal Highness later visited Elm House Temporary Accommodation, 55 Elm Road, Thetford, and was received by Mrs Melinda Raker (Deputy Lieutenant of Norfolk).

Kensington Palace
29th March, 2023

The Duke of Gloucester, Patron, Heritage of London Trust, this afternoon received Mr James Cayzer-Colvin upon relinquishing his appointment as Chairman.

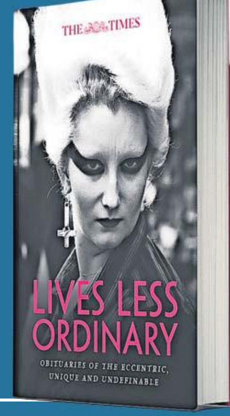
The Duke of Gloucester, Patron, Richard III Society, and The Duchess of Gloucester this evening attended a screening of "the Lost King" at Windsor Castle.

The Duchess of Gloucester, Honorary President, the Lawn Tennis Association, this morning received Ms Sandra Procter (President) and Mr Scott Lloyd (Chief Executive Officer).

St James's Palace
29th March, 2023

The Duke of Kent, Patron, this evening held a Concert and Dinner at St. James's Palace to commemorate the Ninetieth Anniversary of the London Philharmonic Orchestra.

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THE TIMES

Births, Marriages and Deaths

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LOVE the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.
Mark 12.30 (NIV)

Bible verses are provided by the Bible Society

Births

GONZALEZ
on 9th March 2023 to Natasha (née Richardson) and Matthew, a daughter, Poppy Olivia Richardson Gonzalez, sister to Elliot, was born at the PRUH at 2.52pm weighing 8lb 9oz. Her elated family look forward to a lifetime of love and happiness together and would like to thank the midwives and doulas who helped with her birth.

LYNCH on 21st March 2023 to Georgia (née Edwards) and Rupert, a son, Orlando Valentine Edward, brother to Percy.

TRITTON on 25th March 2023 to Pandora and Ollie, a son, Blaise Atlas Jude.

WALDEGRAVE on 15th March 2023 to Kate Orf and Jamie, a son, Alexander Orf, brother to William.

Marriages

MR M.B.M. WILLIAMS AND MISS S.N. PICKERING
The marriage took place on 23rd March 2023 between Martin Blue Macintosh Williams and Simone Natalia Pickering, both of Stamford, Lincolnshire, quietly in London.

Deaths

BRACKENBURY John CBE sadly passed away peacefully surrounded by love on 18th March 2023, aged 87, after a short illness bravely fought. Beloved husband to Desi, beloved father to Amanda, Sara, Jonathon and James, and adored by eight grandchildren and one great-grandchild. Our loss is immeasurable. Private family funeral. Memorial service to be held on 30th May at 2pm. Please indicate your attendance by kindly emailing johnbmemorial2023@gmail.com for further details.

MORISON Jill Trench DL (née Fox) on 24th March 2023, aged 87, at home in Cornwall. Widow of Rodney Carne and Donald Morison, both Royal Navy. Much-loved mother of four, grandmother of ten, great-grandmother of two. Any donations to the Cornwall Community Foundation or Cornwall Air Ambulance. Family cremation.

SELMAN Elizabeth (Betty) (née Ankers) died on 22nd March 2023, aged 73. The loving and much-loved wife of David, adored sister and sister-in-law of Helen and Robert, beloved step-mum of Natasha and Hannah and Granny B to Zack, Oskar and Jake. Funeral will be held at 2pm on Wednesday 5th April at St George's Church, Langton Matravers, Swanage BH19 3HZ. For further details please contact James Smith Funeral Directors on 01929 422455.

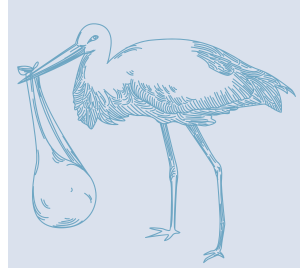
LLOYD WEBBER Nicholas Alastair died on 25th March 2023, aged 43. Beloved husband of Polly and devoted father of Molly and Gus. Much-loved son and brother, as well as by all those lucky enough to have known him. Funeral strictly private. There will be a celebration of Nick's life in due course. Donations, if desired, to St Michael's Hospice, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG24 9NB.

Birthdays

DAVID JOHN HUTCHESON Happy birthday — love of my life and keeper of the poem — the best is yet to come!

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Law

Paris court ‘not a threat to London’

English-language hearings in France have not stolen capital’s legal crown. By **Catherine Baksi**

THOMAS PADILLA/AP



Demonstrators on the tracks at the Gare de Lyon in Paris, where unpopular pension changes have triggered civil unrest

It must have caused tremors around the hallowed halls of the Académie Française, but in the aftermath of Brexit, civil justice officials in Paris opened a bilingual international court that would allow parties to give oral and written evidence in English.

The move was “a real cultural revolution”, Jacques Bouyssou, of Alerion Avocats in Paris, told a recent event organised by the London Solicitors Litigation Association.

Along with other English language courts that sprang up in the Netherlands, Germany and Belgium, it suggested that there were tangible efforts to capitalise on the UK’s departure from the EU and steal London’s crown as a global hub for lucrative commercial dispute resolution.

But five years after the International Chamber of the Paris Court of Appeal opened, it has posed little threat to London, where the work of the Commercial Court continues to thrive.

Most strikingly, when The Times visited the court during Paris Arbitration Week — held against a backdrop of civil unrest over President Macron’s pension reform plans, the proceedings, which concerned jurisdiction in a Venezuelan case, were conducted in French.

“The hurdle for all four of the courts is creating a critical mass of cases,” Hugh Mercer KC, chairman of the international committee of the Bar Council of England and Wales, says. Doing so, he suggests, takes years.

Statistics published by the court show that from its creation early in 2018 until June 2022, it dealt with 186 cases, of which 54 per cent were connected to international arbitration awards, a result of its proximity to the International Chamber of Commerce Court of Arbitration, which is also in the French capital and celebrates its 100th anniversary this year.

Litigants have come from 74 countries, with 65 per cent from Europe. The remainder came from Africa (13 per cent), the Americas (12 per cent)and Asia (11 per cent).

Among the European countries, 20.5 per cent of litigants came from France and about 10 per cent from Germany. Only 4.5 per cent came from the UK.

The creation of the Paris court was a joint effort by the French justice ministry and the local Bar. It allows documents written in English to be submitted without being translated into French, as well as pleadings and oral evidence to be given in English.

Since most commercial international business transactions across the globe are conducted in English, Michael Buhler, a partner in the Paris office of the law firm Orrick, suggests that removing the need to translate documents is sensible, but says that in practice it is rare for pleadings to be in English.

The judges are bilingual, as are increasing numbers of French commercial lawyers. Ana Atallah, a Paris-based partner at Reed Smith, says that French lawyers are “open-minded” about speaking English in court, with some viewing it as “rather chic to speak in English, anywhere”. But, as an advocate who often appears before the court, she says that she has never heard anyone plead in English.

When the UK quit the EU, it was excluded from the Lugano treaty, which enabled reciprocal recognition and enforcement of court judgments among member states. Emilie Vasseur, a litigation and dispute resolution partner in the Paris office of Mayer Brown who helped with its creation from the Bar’s side, says that the loss of automatic reciprocity was a key driver for the court.

‘The hurdle for the courts is creating a critical mass of cases’

After Brexit, she explains, English judgments are subject to a recognition procedure, known as exequatur, to be enforced in the EU, which, she says, can be a long, costly and uncertain process.

Mercer suggests that the UK’s exclusion from the treaty has not been much of a problem. “Even though enforcement using Lugano is the most efficient method, most EU countries are prepared to enforce rulings from countries that are not signatories to the convention,” he says.

The court in Paris, he adds, is handicapped in its desire to be truly international, because only French-qualified lawyers can appear before it. The court remains governed by French civil law and in a francophone country with more parties coming to it from French-speaking and civil law countries, Bouyssou says it is not intended to compete with London.

He says the court has been a “real success”, adding that “in 2018, we had three cases pending before the international court and in 2022 there were more than 250 cases”.

An advantage of litigating in Paris rather than London is the cost. Buhler explains that the French judicial system is, by law, free of charge, and litigants pay only a few hundred euros for court services, compared with a fee of up to £10,000 in London.

In addition, Buhler says, the cost of litigation in France is much lower, even in complex cases, because the proceedings are to a large extent in writing. Crucially, Buhler says, because the winning party in France normally gets only a fraction of its legal costs reimbursed on a lump-sum basis, there is an incentive to keep costs under control.

Buhler says the court “is no doubt part of global competition on the part of the French legal profession to attract a significant number of large commercial and financial disputes”. However, he acknowledges that it has “a long way to go” before it becomes a serious competitor to London.

Lord Wolfson of Tredegar KC, a barrister at One Essex Court, welcomes competition for London “because it helps to keep us on our toes”. He does not see the Paris court as a threat to London’s supremacy and says that there is enough work for both courts.

Apart from the issues of costs and the disclosure regime in London, which he accepts can be a barrier to some litigants, Wolfson, a former Conservative justice minister, is concerned about the impact of the “state of the justice system overall, and especially the physical court estate”.

Judge speaks out about living with Parkinson’s disease

Frances Gibb

It was on a family holiday in 2019 that Mr Justice Mostyn’s son said: “Dad, you really need to get that tremor checked out.”

Mostyn, a senior High Court judge in the family division, was referred to a neurologist, who said the tremor could be benign but flagged up the possibility of Parkinson’s disease. The symptoms worsened and the next year Mostyn had a scan that confirmed he had the condition.

“So that was that,” he says. “By then the tremors had become very pronounced in the right hand with overflow to the left. I was also experiencing great fatigue as well as extremely vivid and sometimes terrifying nightmares. My handwriting had gone to pot.”

Mostyn, who was well known before he became a judge as a celebrated divorce lawyer whose clients included Sir Paul McCartney in his split from Heather Mills, is still sitting — thanks, he says, to treatment from the neurologist Professor Ray Chaudhuri.

He talks openly about the impact of the disease in a recently launched podcast series, *Movers and Shakers*, which he has recorded with five former BBC broadcasters who have Parkinson’s, including Jeremy Paxman, Mark Mardell and Rory Cellan-Jones. The first series of the podcast is under way and two more are planned.

Mostyn says that it is hoped that the project will encourage others to form groups, talk about their condition or simply benefit from listening. “The worst thing is to be alone,” he says.

It is the first time that a serving High Court judge has been given permission to take part in a podcast not directly related to the law. The six meet regularly in a pub in Notting Hill in west London and share their experiences. Mostyn chairs their chats on everything from Parkinson’s treatments and research to the psychological effects — from sex to shopping, pessimism and depression. The conversations are laced with humour, black or otherwise.

“We meet every two to three weeks,” Mostyn says.

“The meetings are so helpful — they have improved life enormously for all of us. Paul [Mayhew-Archer, co-writer of *The Vicar of Dibley*] is the funniest man I have ever met. He says Parkinson’s is the best thing that ever happened to him. He is fantastically positive.” The sixth participant — and only woman — is Gillian Lacey-Solymar, who presented the BBC business show *Working Lunch*.

Mostyn, 65, the second longest serving High Court judge, has given up his judicial leadership roles but still sits four days a week, thanks to “brilliant” judicial assistants who take notes for him. Sir Andrew Macfarlane, president of the family division, and the lord chief justice, Lord Burnett of Maldon, have been “fantastically supportive” — as has Mostyn’s wife, the barrister Elizabeth Saunders.

The judge remains physically active, playing golf, skiing, horse riding and cycling to raise funds for Parkinson’s charities.

He also remains “a prolific judgment writer”. Since being appointed in 2010 he has written 310 reported judgments at an average length of 12,000 words. “About 3.6 million words or half a *War and Peace* each year,” he notes. “The rate has not gone down since I was diagnosed.”

Mostyn is to retire in July, nine years earlier than the statutory age of 75. Not through fear of being unable to do his job — “If I thought that, I’d retire at once,” he says — but “because I don’t know the rate at which this condition will progress or to what bodily or mental state it will take me.

“Even allowing for ever-increasing and varied medications, and for my uber-Tigger-Pollyanna personality, I have to be realistic enough to recognise that at some point, perhaps soon, I will find myself seriously impaired.”

Movers and Shakers **is available on Apple podcasts and other platforms**

Times Law
Editor Jonathan Ames
020 7782 5405 jonathan.ames@thetimes.co.uk
Advertising and marketing
For print and online: Jeanine Kiala
020 7782 7518 jeanine.kiala@news.co.uk

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In conversation
Simon Maynard on his fight to break down barriers for disabled lawyers
thetimes.co.uk

Ruling bolsters power of prenups

Jonathan Ames



BEN STANSALL/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

The step reinforces the agreements' strength after Karin Radmacher's 2010 case

Karin Radmacher made legal history in 2010 when the Supreme Court backed the German heiress's argument that her prenuptial agreement with Nicolas Granatino should be upheld.

That ruling saved Radmacher millions because the prenup had stipulated that neither would claim for a lump sum settlement if they divorced. The Supreme Court left Granatino — a banker turned student — with only maintenance payments.

Thirteen years on, a High Court ruling has this month taken a significant step towards reinforcing the position that courts should take account of prenups provided that they are not completely unreasonable or signed under duress.

The case involved another foreign couple, with the 61-year-old husband being resident in the UK. They owned London and country properties, with the 51-year-old wife being described in court as a "home-maker and child-carer".

The couple, who had been together since 2003, were anonymised because they have two children aged 14 and 15, who attend fee-paying schools in the capital.

In his ruling, Mr Justice Moor described the husband as a "very successful finance professional", illustrating that with evidence to show that by the time the couple signed a prenup in 2005, he was said to be worth £32.5 million.

The drafting of the agreement was not easy. The judge pointed out that at one stage it was alleged that the man accused the woman of being a "gold digger". While he consistently denied using that exact phrase, the husband acknowledged that he had said that the original terms of the prenup proposed by the wife's lawyers amounted to a "gold-digger's charter".

After her ruling, Radmacher said: "I know some think of prenuptial agreements as being unromantic, but for us it was meant to be a way of proving we were marrying only for love." Five years earlier, MN and AN, as the couple in the latest case are referred to, were demonstrating how forlorn that hope can be.

Ultimately, MN and AN struck a prenup agreement that stipulated that in the case of break-up, each would retain their separate property accumulated before they met. In addition, the wife would receive £500,000 for each complete year of the marriage to a maximum of £12.5 million on the 25th anniversary of the marriage. She would receive half of the London property on the eighth anniversary or the arrival of children, if earlier.

She would receive 50 per cent of the increase in the value of the net assets during the marriage if that sum was greater, with the award capped at 42 per cent of the husband's net worth. There would also be maintenance of £60,000 annually for each child plus school fees and medical expenses. After ten years, the maintenance would be indexed in accordance with the consumer prices index. Importantly, both parties stated that they had received separate and independent legal advice, and that they were freely entering into the agreement, which they intended to be "legally binding upon them".

To cut a long and unhappy story short, as they say far too infrequently in the family courts, the marriage broke down in 2019 — and the wife argued that the prenup terms were insufficient and that she had been unduly influenced to agree to the deal.

In finding mainly for the husband, the judge noted that the Radmacher ruling came after this couple's prenup had been agreed — but he said that could not be a "vitiating factor".

Simon Bruce, a partner at Dawson Cornwell who acted for the husband as well as for Radmacher for part of her legal battle, says the High Court case "was a really serious challenge" to the principles laid down by the Supreme Court in 2010.

Bruce adds that the latest judgment swung in part on the fact that "the wife had a very good lawyer at the time of the agreement who fully advised her that she should expect to be bound by the prenup, and she entered into the agreement of her own free will".

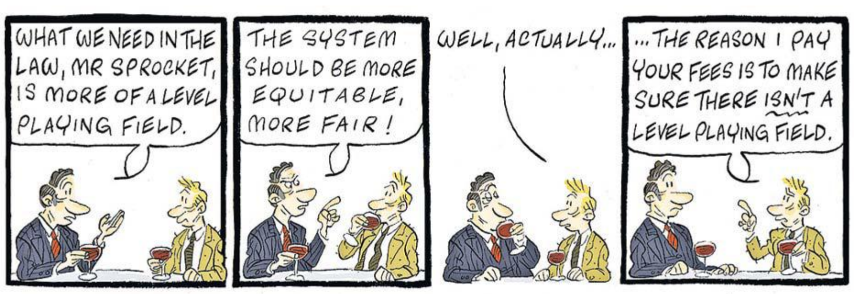
As a result, he argues that the ruling "confirms the strength of prenups, particularly where specialist advice is taken at the time they are drafted".

Mark Harper, a partner at Hughes Fowler Carruthers, says that lawyers are discovering that "the trick is to propose terms in a prenup which are more mean" than what a court would order in a divorce, "but not so mean as to justify the judge interfering with the terms agreed". He says that in the most recent case the fact that a judge might have awarded the wife more in spousal maintenance without the prenup "did not matter" because what was agreed in the prenup "was more than enough".

Marwa Hadi-Barnes, a lawyer at the firm Lewis Denley, agrees that the latest case has solidified the position that while "prenups are not legally binding, the court should give effect to it if certain conditions are met in terms of the circumstances they are entered into and the content of the agreement".

Suzanne Todd, a partner at Withers, dismisses the notion that prenups are the exclusive preserve of the mega-rich. "Cases involving families with more modest means can also benefit from having agreements," she says. "The same rules apply: the agreement must be entered into freely with a good understanding of its implications, and must not leave either party in a predicament of need."

King's Counsel
Alex Steuart



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Lawyer of the week Elaine Banton



Elaine Banton of 7BR Chambers succeeded in an employment tribunal for Jagruti Rajput, a former deputy head of compliance at Commerzbank, through the Bar Council's direct access scheme. Rajput was passed over for promotion to head of markets compliance in 2015, and was described as having "an unhealthy obsession" with work when she attended a meeting early in maternity leave. The tribunal awarded £300,684 compensation for discrimination after an almost seven-year legal battle.

What were the biggest hurdles you had to overcome in this case? Navigating the manifold complexities of a highly contested retrial. We succeeded in six allegations of direct sex and maternity discrimination and harassment, including that her role was diminished both pre and post-maternity leave.

What is the best decision you have taken as a lawyer? To follow my interest in employment and equality law.

Who do you most admire in the law? Dame Linda Dobbs, Baroness Hale of Richmond, Baroness Kennedy of The Shaws and Baroness Scotland of Asthal, all inspirational trailblazers.

What is the best advice you have received? Persist.

What is the funniest thing that has happened in your job? During lockdown, having to stop my son who was beginning his violin lesson, just as I was about to commence cross-examination in an online hearing.

What are the best and worst elements of being a lawyer? Best: the stimulation of varied, interesting and impactful cases. Worst: long hours, sometimes at short notice.

What law would you enact? Extend a proactive duty to eliminate discrimination to large-scale private employers and equal pay principles to other protected characteristics such as race and disability — and strengthen provisions regarding fertility treatment and menopausal symptoms in the workplace.

What is your favourite book? *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings,* Maya Angelou's searing autobiography, captivated me.

Linda Tsang
l_tsang@hotmail.com

OUT OF COURT

The cases, the chatter, the chaos: what's really going on in the law

The Bar and a higher calling

Students are at present "called" to the Bar after a vocational course, but before pupillage, so they are not allowed to practise as barristers. Nick Vineall KC, the Bar Council chairman, argues that call should be deferred until the end of pupillage.

Speaking at a service at Temple Church he appeared to have found what he thought was a supporter in a high place. Jesus, he said, "seems to foresee the structural problem of recruitment facing the Bar today" when he was recorded in the Gospel of Matthew as saying "many are called but few are chosen".

Online bragging rights

Vineall is a tenant at 4 Pump Court in London, where he may have some awkward conversations to come with his chambers-mates. In his Temple Church address, the Bar leader criticised barristers who threatened the independence of the Bar by risking association with the views or causes of clients.

He said that barristers should not brag about their successes online. A brief glance reveals that his own set posted three success stories in three months on its news and events page. Vineall tells The Times that a problem only arises "when the comment associates the lawyer with the merits of the client's cause" and that many, including his chambers-mates, are careful not to cross the line.

Caught on camera

Swamped by legal groupies at a recent event, Lord Neuberger of Abbotsbury, a former president of the Supreme Court, breathed a sigh of relief. He tells The Times that when he was a sitting judge, students and lawyers would ask him questions about cases and the law. "It's much easier now," he says. "They just want a selfie."

Witness dies at 105

Liz Zettl, who was thought to have been the oldest ever witness in a murder trial when she appeared in court aged 101, has died at 105. In 2019 she gave evidence in one of the most macabre murder trials in recent memory. Benjamin Field, a 28-year-old church warden, was jailed for a minimum of 36 years for murdering a university lecturer to inherit his estate.

Zettl was no stranger to excitement, and yet those who knew her said that she maintained a cool demeanour. She was even a keen amateur motor racing driver. Her funeral in Buckinghamshire is to take place today.

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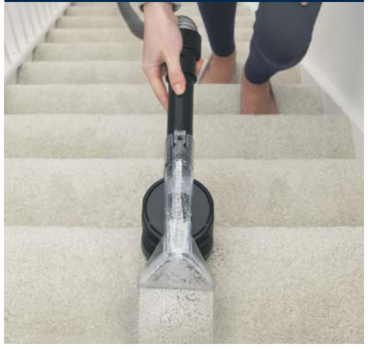
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Thu 7 **Amsterdam, Netherlands**
★Recommended Excursion×: The Waterways of Amsterdam
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Fri 8 **Hamburg (from Bremerhaven), Germany**
View famed works of art at the Hamburger Kunsthalle, have a cup of coffee on one of the terraces of the Alsterarkaden, stroll through the historic warehouse district or enjoy the view from the top of 400-year-old St. Michaelis Church
★Recommended Excursion×: Bremen & Beer
Enjoy an in-depth tour and tasting at the legendary Beck's Brewery and be introduced to the architectural beauty of medieval Bremen on a relaxed city walk

Sat 9 **Kristiansand, Norway** (arrive early pm)

Sun 10 **Skagen, Denmark**

Mon 11 - Tue 12 **Berlin (from Warnemünde), Germany** (overnight – depart late night)
★Recommended Excursion×: Medieval Flavors of Rostock
Experience Rostock's medieval landmarks up-close on a guided walk through its historic district. Ascend to the top of St. Peter's Church for high-altitude views over the city



Wed 13 **Malmö, Sweden**

Thu 14 **Copenhagen, Denmark**
See another side of this lovely city with a cruise along its charming canals. Visit the quaint old harbor at Nyhavn and beautiful Rosenborg Castle and, of course, the famed statue of the Little Mermaid

Fri 15 **Lysekil, Sweden**

Sun 17 **Arrive in Portsmouth**

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Today Bright spells and showers, heaviest and perhaps turning thundery in eastern areas. Max 16C (61F), min 2C (36F)

Around Britain

Key: b=bright, c=cloud, d=drizzle, pc=partly cloudy du=dull, f=fair, fg=fog, h=hail, m=mist, r=rain, sh=showers, sl=sleet, sn=snow, s=sun, t=thunder *=previous day **=data not available

	Temp C midday yesterday		Rain mm 24 hrs to 5pm yesterday	Sun hr*
Aberdeen	8	D	3.8	0.2
Aberporth	12	D	3.2	0.0
Anglesey	11	C	3.2	0.3
Aviemore	10	R	2.2	0.0
Barnstaple	13	C	1.0	**
Bedford	11	C	1.4	**
Belfast	11	R	7.8	1.0
Birmingham	11	R	2.6	**
Bournemouth	11	M	2.6	0.0
Bridlington	9	C	1.4	**
Bristol	12	C	3.4	0.7
Camborne	12	R	4.4	0.1
Cardiff	12	R	4.4	0.0
Edinburgh	12	C	1.4	0.0
Eskdalemuir	9	R	12.8	0.0
Glasgow	11	C	4.0	0.0
Hereford	13	D	1.6	**
Herstmonceux	11	FG	1.2	0.0
Ipswich	11	R	0.8	0.0
Isle of Man	10	C	5.2	0.0
Isle of Wight	11	C	1.0	**
Jersey	**	**	1.6	0.1
Keswick	12	D	5.4	**
Kinloss	12	C	3.6	0.0
Leeds	11	D	0.6	**
Lerwick	5	C	0.0	2.9
Leuchars	11	R	0.2	0.0
Lincoln	12	R	3.0	0.0
Liverpool	12	C	0.4	**
London	12	D	0.2	0.0
Lyneham	12	C	1.4	0.0
Manchester	12	C	0.2	0.0
Margate	11	D	0.0	0.0
Milford Haven	11	C	1.8	**
Newcastle	11	PC	0.2	**
Nottingham	11	D	2.4	0.0
Orkney	7	R	1.8	2.7
Oxford	13	D	0.4	**
Plymouth	11	R	3.0	**
Portland	11	C	1.0	**
Scilly, St Mary's	12	C	3.0	**
Shoreham	12	M	0.6	0.0
Shrewsbury	11	C	0.2	0.1
Snowdonia	11	R	13.2	**
Southend	12	R	0.0	0.0
South Uist	10	R	5.8	**
Stornoway	10	C	4.6	0.0
Tiree	9	C	4.2	0.0
Whitehaven	10	C	8.2	0.3
Wick	8	R	1.8	**
Yeovilton	13	D	1.0	0.2

The world

All readings local midday yesterday

Alicante	20	S	Madeira	22	S
Amsterdam	11	B	Madrid	20	S
Athens	12	PC	Malaga	20	PC
Auckland	16	S	Mallorca	19	S
Bahrain	25	S	Malta	16	PC
Bangkok	33	PC	Melbourne	16	SH
Barbados	30	PC	Mexico City	27	S
Barcelona	17	PC	Miami	29	PC
Beijing	22	S	Milan	15	PC
Beirut	17	R	Mombasa	33	PC
Belgrade	9	S	Montreal	3	B
Berlin	9	PC	Moscow	8	SH
Bermuda	22	B	Mumbai	29	S
Bordeaux	25	S	Munich	12	B
Brussels	14	B	Nairobi	26	B
Bucharest	5	PC	Naples	16	PC
Budapest	7	S	New Orleans	22	C
Buenos Aires	29	S	New York	9	B
Cairo	21	PC	Nice	15	B
Calcutta	33	S	Nicosia	19	PC
Canberra	19	B	Oslo	0	PC
Cape Town	20	PC	Paris	18	S
Chicago	9	B	Perth	27	S
Copenhagen	6	B	Prague	5	PC
Corfu	14	S	Reykjavik	4	B
Delhi	30	S	Riga	1	B
Dubai	27	PC	Rio de Janeiro	28	B
Dublin	13	B	Riyadh	26	S
Faro	21	S	Rome	15	PC
Florence	14	PC	San Francisco	10	R
Frankfurt	12	PC	Santiago	26	S
Geneva	16	B	São Paulo	23	B
Gibraltar	19	PC	Seoul	13	S
Helsinki	-3	B	Seychelles	32	PC
Hong Kong	22	PC	Singapore	31	SH
Honolulu	26	R	St Petersburg	-1	SN
Istanbul	8	B	Stockholm	-1	B
Jerusalem	20	PC	Sydney	27	SH
Johannesburg	21	PC	Tel Aviv	20	PC
Kuala Lumpur	35	PC	Tenerife	33	S
Kyiv	**	**	Tokyo	15	PC
Lanzarote	31	S	Vancouver	15	PC
Las Palmas	30	S	Venice	14	PC
Lima	24	PC	Vienna	7	R
Lisbon	22	S	Warsaw	5	S
Los Angeles	18	PC	Washington	14	B
Luxor	31	S	Zurich	13	R

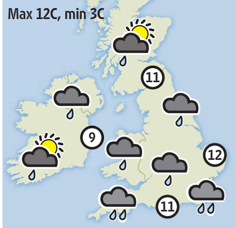
Five days ahead

An unsettled couple of days with outbreaks of rain and showers, drier and brighter next week

Tomorrow

Patchy cloud and showery rain across southern Britain, heaviest through the afternoon. Bright periods and light rain and drizzle elsewhere.

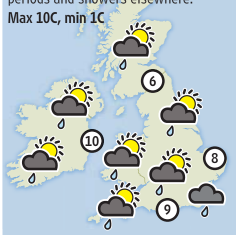
Max 12C, min 3C



Saturday

A band of rain will linger across western Britain through the day with some brighter spells at times. Bright periods and showers elsewhere.

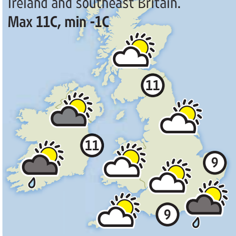
Max 10C, min 1C



Sunday

A mostly dry day with hazy spells of sunshine and a chance of the odd patch of light rain or drizzle across southern Ireland and southeast Britain.

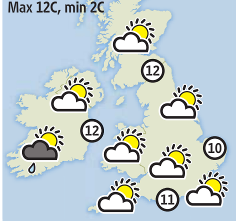
Max 11C, min -1C



Monday

Remaining largely dry with lengthy spells of sunshine and a few spots of light rain in southern and western Ireland through the afternoon.

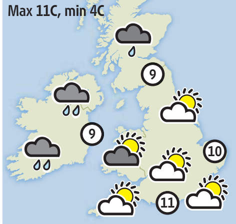
Max 12C, min 2C



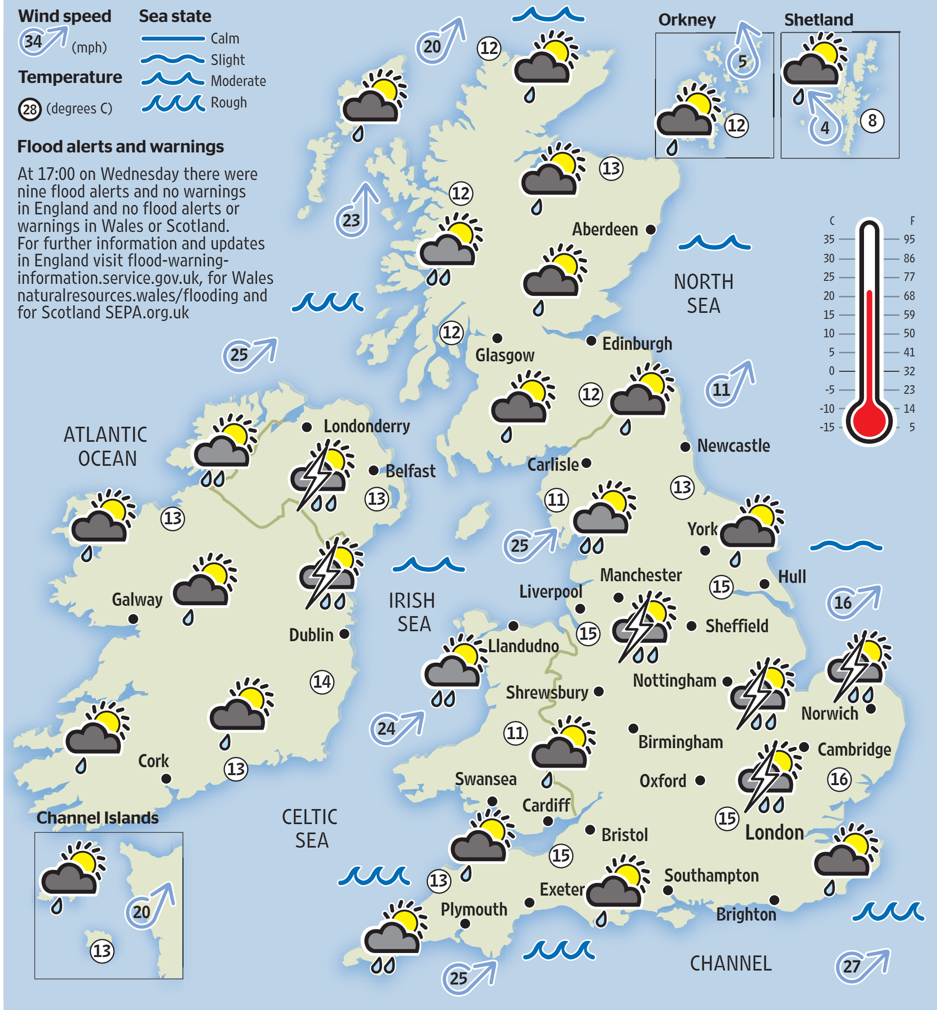
Tuesday

A band of thick cloud and rain will move across Ireland and northern Britain through the afternoon. Dry with sunny spells elsewhere.

Max 11C, min 4C



The Times weather page is provided by Weatherquest



Flood alerts and warnings

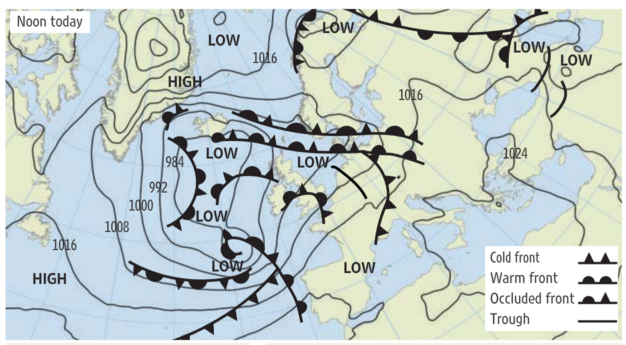
At 17:00 on Wednesday there were nine flood alerts and no warnings in England and no flood alerts or warnings in Wales or Scotland. For further information and updates in England visit flood-warning-information.service.gov.uk, for Wales naturalresources.wales/flooding and for Scotland SEPA.org.uk

General situation: A day of bright intervals and outbreaks of rain and showers, heaviest in eastern Britain. **Republic of Ireland, N Ireland:** Bright spells and scattered showers, heaviest and most frequent in the afternoon with the odd rumble of thunder in the northeast. Light to moderate southwesterly winds. Maximum 14C (57F), minimum 5C (41F). **NW Scotland, Argyll, SW Scotland, Lake District, Glasgow:** A day of patchy cloud and showery rain, heaviest and most widespread through the afternoon. Light to moderate south to southwesterly winds. Maximum 12C (54F), minimum 2C (36F). **Edinburgh and Dundee, Cen Highland, NE Scotland, Moray Firth, Aberdeen, N Isles, Borders, NE Eng:** A dry morning with lengthy spells of sunshine. Bright intervals and outbreaks of light rain and showers through the afternoon. Light to moderate south to southwesterly winds. Maximum 13C (55F), minimum 2C (36F). **Wales, SW Eng, Channel Is, IoM:** Bright periods and scattered showers, heaviest in the morning. Moderate southwesterly winds. Maximum 15C (59F), minimum 7C (45F). **London, E Anglia, SE Eng, Cen S Eng, E Mids, W Mids, NW Eng, Cen N Eng, E Eng:** Sunny periods and scattered showers, heaviest and perhaps turning thundery through the afternoon. Light to moderate southwesterly winds, fresh along the coast. Maximum 16C (61F), minimum 8C (46F).

Tides

Tidal predictions. Heights in metres

Today		Ht		Ht
Aberdeen	08:54	3.1	22:03	3.1
Avonmouth	--:--	--	13:48	8.7
Belfast	06:13	2.9	19:03	2.6
Cardiff	--:--	--	13:50	8.1
Devonport	--:--	--	12:18	3.9
Dover	06:11	5.0	18:56	5.0
Dublin	07:14	3.2	20:04	3.0
Falmouth	--:--	--	12:04	3.6
Greenock	06:47	2.8	19:42	2.4
Harwich	06:27	3.1	18:46	3.0
Holyhead	05:37	4.2	18:51	4.0
Hull	--:--	--	13:08	5.4
Leith	10:03	4.1	22:49	4.0
Liverpool	06:13	6.8	19:12	6.6
London Bridge	08:33	5.6	20:54	5.3
Lowestoft	05:30	2.0	17:09	2.0
Milford Haven	--:--	--	13:42	4.6
Morecambe	06:27	6.7	19:26	6.4
Newhaven	05:49	4.7	19:11	4.6
Newquay	--:--	--	12:41	4.7
Oban	--:--	--	15:06	2.5
Penzance	--:--	--	12:19	3.8
Portsmouth	06:16	3.5	19:38	3.5
Shoreham	06:02	4.4	18:54	4.4
Southampton	--:--	--	--:--	--
Swansea	--:--	--	13:29	6.3
Tees	11:05	4.1	--:--	--
Weymouth	--:--	--	13:00	1.1



Synoptic situation

An occluded front will move across southern Britain and Ireland through the day bringing bright spells and scattered showers, heaviest and most frequent through the afternoon with the odd rumble of thunder in places. Another occluded front will then move into the British Isles through the evening bringing thick cloud and showery rain to southern areas.

Highs and lows

24hrs to 5pm yesterday

Warmest: Derrylin, 15.8C
Coldest: Cairnwell, Aberdeenshire, 0.6C
Wettest: Capel Curig, Gwynedd, 13.2mm
Sunniest: Lerwick, 2.9hrs*

Sun and moon

For Greenwich
Sun rises: 06.40
Sun sets: 19.28
Moon rises: 11.45
Moon sets: 05.12 Fri
Full Moon: April 6

Hours of darkness

Aberdeen	20:12-06:10
Belfast	20:25-06:28
Birmingham	20:07-06:14
Cardiff	20:11-06:20
Exeter	20:12-06:22
Glasgow	20:19-06:20
Liverpool	20:12-06:18
London	19:59-06:08
Manchester	20:09-06:14
Newcastle	20:08-06:10
Norwich	19:54-06:01
Penzance	20:20-06:31
Sheffield	20:06-06:11

Weather Eye
Paul Simons



Despite the weather, springtime is here and the grass is greener, flowers are blooming and daylight is growing longer and stronger. But there is a darker side to spring, because air pollution from microscopic particles grows worse, and farming is to blame — for polluting the air not only in rural areas, but in cities as well.

A team from University College London studied the springtime particle pollution phenomenon and found that more than a quarter of urban air pollution came from farms, creating 38 per cent of the air pollution in Leicester and 25 per cent in London in 2019.

"Leicester is surrounded by agriculture, and is relatively small, so we would expect some influence [from farming]," Eloise Morais at UCL explained on BBC Radio 4's *Farming Today*. "But the surprise was that a city as large and sprawling as London is experiencing a really large influence from agricultural emissions in rural areas."

Ammonia made the largest contribution to the particles of air pollution. Ammonia is a gas given off by animal manure and slurry, as well as fertilisers and especially urea. This is the pungent gas that makes a pong in farming areas, but it is also highly reactive and combines with other polluting gases in the atmosphere such as nitrogen oxides and sulphur dioxide to create particles called PM2.5s. These particles are so small they can float in the air for days and can travel long distances, from farming areas to distant cities. In fact, particle pollution from Europe can reach the UK.

The particles can be easily breathed in, causing respiratory diseases, and can also pass into the bloodstream and cause other serious health problems. In the spring of 2014 high levels of PM2.5s led to two bouts of air pollution lasting ten days estimated to have caused about 600 deaths in the UK.

The trend in ammonia emissions from pig and poultry farming is showing a decline but the air pollution from cattle farming remains stubbornly high.

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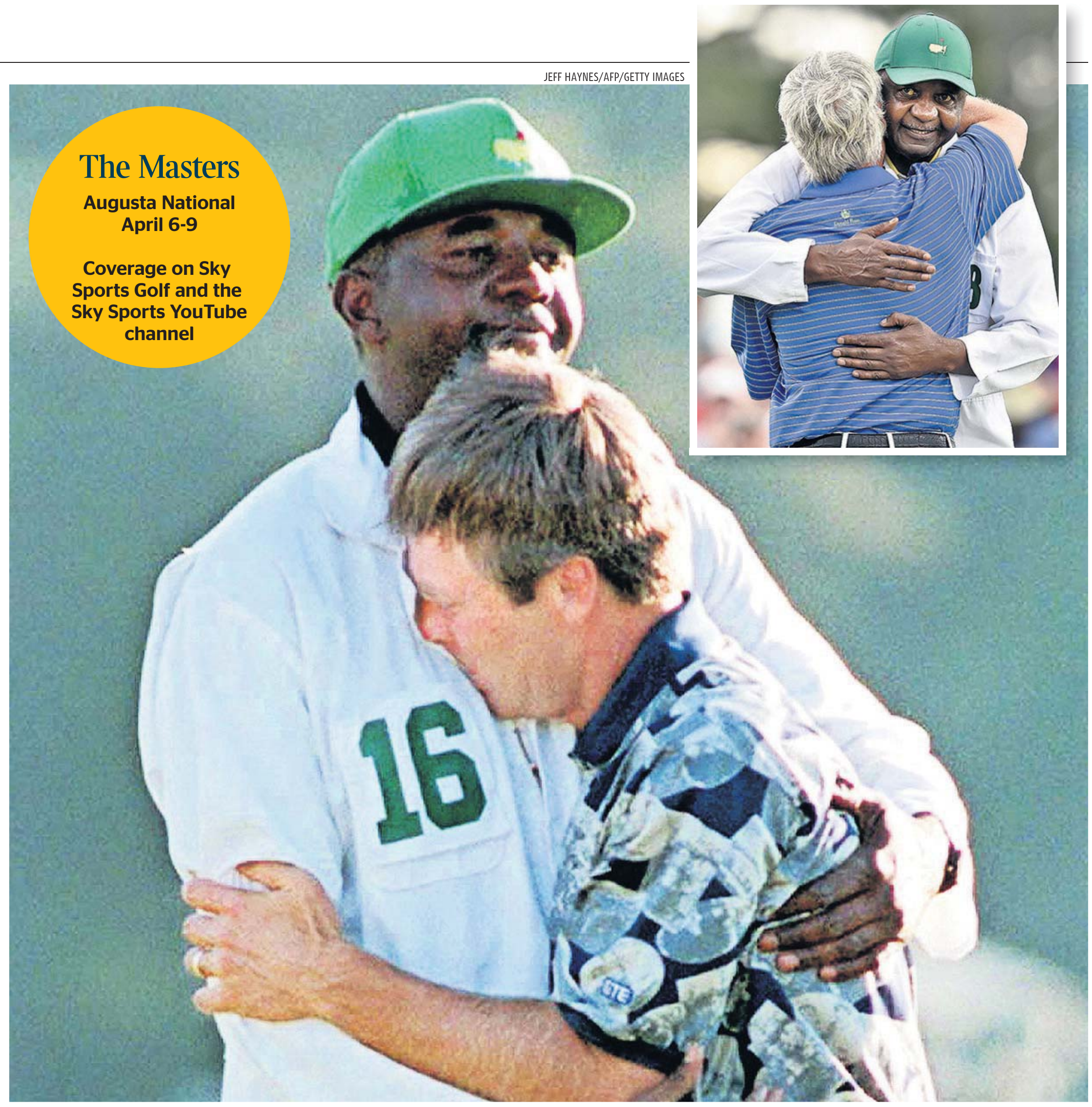
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Sport

‘Secret-service guard followed me and Player’

Caddie Carl Jackson tells **Rick Broadbent** of his Augusta round in 1970, and an emotional win with Ben Crenshaw



The Masters
Augusta National
April 6-9
Coverage on Sky Sports Golf and the Sky Sports YouTube channel

JEFF HAYNES/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Crenshaw hugs his caddie Jackson after winning the Masters in 1995, days after burying his mentor. Inset, the pair in 2015

‘Love thy neighbour.” It sounds a glib phrase, perhaps a bit biblical for some, and the sort of homespun fare made for fireside tapestries. And then Carl Jackson follows it by telling you about half a century at the Masters, the apartheid demos down Washington Road, the secret-service agents, the billionaires and the civil-rights activists. Remarkably, there is not a trace of bitterness in the king of caddies’ tale.

Jackson, 76, and 6ft 5in in his boiler-suit pomp, is the man who bestrode Augusta National as an old-school sage. He also straddled generations. He first worked the Masters as a 14-year-old in 1961. When Augusta National bowed to player pressure in 1982 and stopped using the all-black club caddies in 1983, “loopers” with names like Stovepipe and Cigarette Jones disappeared. Jackson endured.

Ben Crenshaw knew a good thing when he saw it and the pair teamed up at Augusta on 39 occasions, winning in 1984 and 1995. The latter was one of Augusta’s most emotional as Crenshaw crumbled in pain and pleasure four days after burying his swing mentor, Harvey Penick. The photo of Jackson’s ursine hug was a badge of honour for a club that has had a chequered history as well as a monochrome one.

For the first time Jackson is telling all for a forthcoming documentary, *Rise Above*. After a record 54 appearances at the Masters, he remains relevant to the game, with Jordan Spieth and Scottie Scheffler both heeding his advice before their wins, in 2015 and 2022 respectively. His impact crossed the ropes, though, as highlighted in 1970.

“That year apartheid was very pronounced in the world and Gary Player was catching flak for being South African,” Jackson says. “The NAACP [civil rights organisation] was on Washington Road picketing and both Gary Player and his caddie, Arness Nipper, received death threats. Nipper quit, so who could work for Gary Player? It came down to me. I was one of the shop employees. I thought about it and said a quick ‘yes’ because this was the best chance I’d had to win the Masters.”

Player, though, had a friend with him and preferred his advice during practice. Jackson remembers: “Gary Player said to me, ‘Carl I’m going to make your job real easy this week — I just want you to keep my clubs clean and keep up,’ sort of keep quiet. I took offence to that. For the practice round… I said a couple of things over the top of what they were thinking and they tried to prove me wrong but I was correct. When it came to the tournament I had my own personal secret-service guard checking up on me. It was a serious time.”

Player quickly learnt to listen to his caddie, right up until the 72nd hole. H was on the fairway, tied for the lead, and Jackson recommended a five-iron. Player said his adrenaline was up and that was too much club. “And he hit a beautiful six-iron into that Sunday pin and it fell short, in the trap. Once that was done I exhaled by going into the bag room, and I cried. It was testing.”

He had faced bigger tests. Jackson grew up in Sand Hills, a poor, black community bordering Augusta National. Yards and a world away, he says this bastion of white privilege never provoked feelings of injustice, merely an opportunity.

“The elite was just over there and we had our place on the corner where we would group at night,” he says. “Pretty often the wealthy kids, the white kids, would drive through our neighbourhood and call us that name, the n-word, and then even little old ladies would try to pick up a brick to throw at the car. Then there was marching and rioting, but I could not be any part of the riots. It made no sense, because when they were over no one was going to jail but black people.”

The second-oldest of nine children, he never knew his father and had to drop out of school to look after his siblings. He says his grandfather instilled “integrity” in him. One day, aged 13, he filled in as a caddie at Augusta National. Jack Stephens, a billionaire member who would become the club president, took a liking to him. “They were going to pull me off the property because of my age, but he stepped in, figured out a way to keep me. He hired me over a fully grown man. My life changed.”

Stephens had seen something in him. The documentary-makers call it dignity and grace. Jackson calls it instinct. “It’s built into you. They use yardage books now but they were not known until around 1973 at Augusta National. The way it was done was: we figured out how far a guy hit a seven-iron and then we could go either way and get him on the green. They are refining it now but one thing tech doesn’t tell you is what to do when the wind is 25mph. That’s when the instincts have to be there. I see good caddies lean on the numbers too much now and it costs them.”

The second Masters triumph transcended golf. A painting of him comforting Crenshaw by the artist Henry Taylor, titled *Hush Now…You Won* hangs in the house of the rapper Drake. With the Masters no longer using the club caddies, and the festering racial and economic fault-lines in Augusta, it was an image that mattered.

“That was a stressful week because Mr Penick had died and Ben had to carry that around. People would be shouting out they were sorry and I’d have to get him focused on the next shot. I remember at the back of the green the other caddie reminded me to get the flag as a souvenir. As I turned around there’s Ben, all crossed over. I say, ‘What the heck is wrong with Ben?’ He was gone.” When Jackson had colon cancer diagnosed in 2000 it was Crenshaw who paid for the prohibitively expensive treatment in South Africa. That time Jackson broke down in tears.

Jackson was the first black guest to play at Augusta, alongside Stephens, in 1988. He still works for Stephens’s son. The documentary is in post-production and will show Jackson as a man who built bridges rather than raged against the machine. Why did he not grow bitter at Augusta’s dividing lines? “It’s not a black and white thing,” he says. “It’s a hate and love thing, righteous and unrighteous, and that’s still tearing our country apart. It starts with our politics. You have to have respect. Love thy neighbour. That’s what’s missing.”

He drifts back to being the boy at home, looking at schoolbound pals and “knowing in my heart I was losing”. He adds: “When you face obstacles you can be defeated or you can try to rise above them.” It is why he set up his Carl’s Kids Foundation, “for kids like me growing up in needy, stressful situations”. And then in a graceful debunking of modern golf mantras, he says: “They’re growing the game but I feel the game is not considering what I call ‘south-of-the-railroad tracks’.”

With a hand in the grassroots this evergreen giant may also have another in this year’s Masters. “Jordan Spieth said, ‘We go off Carl’s information,’ and in that time he won one Masters and left two on the table,” he says with a smile. Last year Crenshaw asked him to advise Scheffler, who duly won. He did, but didn’t reveal all of his secrets. This year? “If Scottie wants it, I’m here,” says the man from next door.

Peaty: I’m looking forward to finding love of swimming again

CONTINUED FROM BACK

can address the imbalance in my life.” Peaty, who won Olympic gold in the 100m breaststroke in 2016 and 2021 and was also part of the gold medal-winning 4x100m mixed medley relay team in Tokyo, endured setbacks last year in both his personal life and in the pool.

He took a long break from swimming after the delayed 2020 Tokyo Games and was then forced to withdraw from the defence of his world title in Budapest when he broke a foot at a training camp in Tenerife.

He recovered in time to make it on to the blocks for England at the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham but suffered a shock defeat in a 100m final won by his team-mate James Wilby as he failed even to finish on the podium, coming fourth.

Although Peaty won the 50m title a few days later, he withdrew from the European Championships in Rome, and after a holiday with his partner, Eirianedd Munro, and their two-year-old son, George, the couple announced they were going their separate ways.

Of late, Peaty has posted several messages on social media suggesting that he would only continue in the sport until the moment he no longer enjoys it. He was the first British swimmer to retain an Olympic title and is aiming to become only the second man, after Michael Phelps, the American great, to win the same title in the pool at three Olympic Games.

“Everyone wants to sit in your seat until they have to sit in your seat… very few people understand what winning and success does to an individual’s mental health,” Peaty added in his statement, released on social media.

“They don’t understand the pressures these individuals put on themselves to win over and over again. I’m hugely grateful for all the support I am receiving from my team and family at British Swimming, along with my incredible sponsors, family and friends.

“As always, I thank the swimming community and beyond for the incredible support I’ve received. This sport has given me everything I am and I’m looking forward to finding the love I have for it again.”

GB to face Australia after tough Davis Cup group stage draw

Tennis

Great Britain have been handed a tough draw in the group stage of the Davis Cup finals, where they will take on last year's runners-up Australia along with France and Switzerland at Manchester's AO Arena in September.

Leon Smith's side qualified for the group stage by defeating Colombia 3-1 away in February. Britain's top three singles players, Cameron Norrie, Dan Evans and Jack Draper, were all called up for the Colombia tie with Andy Murray another possibility.

Australia's challenge is likely to be led by the world No 18, Alex de Minaur, and Wimbledon runner-up, Nick Kyrgios.

Meanwhile a prominent Russian tennis player is hoping to switch her national allegiance in the coming weeks after submitting a French citizenship application. Varvara Gracheva, the world No 54, was born in Moscow but moved to France at the age of 16. The 22-year-old took a French citizenship exam in November and filed her application papers this month.

Players from Russia and Belarus were barred from competing at Wimbledon last year, in response to Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. However, after pressure from the ATP and WTA tours, that ban is set to be lifted this year.

Gracheva has trained at the Elite Tennis Centre in Cannes for the past six years but has always competed under the Russian flag. Now she is hoping to become a French citizen in time for the French Open at Roland Garros, the second grand-slam event of the year, in May. Gracheva insisted that this her the plan even before the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

"When I started the process it was not even close to the situation [the war], nobody knew what was going to happen," Gracheva said after losing to Petra Kvitova at the Miami Open.

Hexham

Thunderer

1.35 Leading Force (nb) **3.55** Lissen To The Lady
2.10 Ashjan **4.30** Trevelyn's Corn
2.45 Miss Lamb **5.05** Queen Of Hindsight
3.20 Twoshotsoftequila

Going: heavy-soft in places **Sky Sports Racing**

1.35 Maiden Hurdle (£4,901: 2m 4f) (11 runners)

1 25222 **LEADING FORCE** 33 A M Thomson 6-11-7 **R Mania**
2 600F **RAJJAMATAZ** 25 Dr R Newland 5-11-7 **C Hammond**
3 5P100 **ROBERT D'ORES** 14 (T) G Bewley 6-11-7 **J Bewley (3)**
4 P2F-3 **TOOMBRIDGE** 19 (T) I Duncan 7-11-7 **C O'Farrell**
5 463 **FETCH IT YOURSELF** 14 Ruth Jefferson 5-11-0 **T Midgley (5)**
6 10506 **HOT AS PEPPER** 36 (T,D) J McConnell (Ire) 7-11-0 **B Hayes**
7 4456 **LUNAR GLOW** 14 G Boanas 5-11-0 **Sean Quinlan**
8 0-00 **PARELLI POWER** 11 Mrs J Walton 7-11-0 **R Chapman**
9 04 **TARA BROOCH** 9 M Walford 5-11-0 **J Hamilton**
10 5000 **THORSDA** 14 T Davidson 6-11-0 **Doubtful**
11 654 **TOROSAY** 20 L Russell 5-11-0 **S Mulqueen**

6-4 Leading Force, 7-4 Hot As Pepper, 6-1 Torosay, 8-1 Fetch It Yourself, 16-1 Rajjamataz, 20-1 Lunar Glow, 25-1 Toombridge, 66-1 Robert D'ores, Tara Brooch.

Thunderer's choice: Leading Force has a good opportunity to go one better than past three races **Danger:** Hot As Pepper

2.10 Handicap Chase (£5,281: 2m) (7)

1 3626- **HELL ON EARTH** 628 (P) Catch Bissett 9-12-2 **B Lynn (3)**
2 46005 **ASHJAN** 14 (P,T) S Forster 10-10-13 **P W Wadge (5)**
3 -0306 **MOONACURA** 14 (B,BF) W Coltherd 6-10-4 **D R Fox**
4 5-U00 **CHOIX DES ARMES** 58 (H) Mrs A C Hamilton 11-10-3 **N Moscrop**
5 U0544 **CUDGEL** 14 (B,T,C) J Walton 10-10-2 **Craig Nichol**
6 PU40P **BANDIT D'AINAY** 16 (P,T) M Hammond 12-10-2 **C O'Farrell**
7 50P0P **COURT JUSTICE** 20 (P) P Kirby 6-10-2 **T Dowson**

3-1 Cudgel, 7-2 Moonacura, 4-1 Hell On Earth, 9-2 Ashjan, 8-1 Choix Des Armes, 10-1 Court Justice, Bandit D'Ainay.

Thunderer's choice: Ashjan has yet to spark this season but he's tumbled in the weights **Danger** Moonacura

2.45 Handicap Hurdle (£7,182: 2m) (5)

1 32PF5 **DELUXE RANGE** 91 (W,P) A M Thomson 8-12-2 **R Mania**
2 -2120 **BEAT BOX** 11 (P,D) J Ewart 7-11-10 **E Austin (5)**
3 -3441 **HORN CAPE** 7 B Haslam 6-11-9(7ex) **J Hogan (5)**
4 /3-51 **MISS LAMB** 14 (CD) J O'Keeffe 7-11-5 **B Garritty**
5 00-0 **I DOUBT THAT** 31 (T) D Bourke 5-10-10 **Craig Nichol**

6-4 Horn Cape, 15-8 Miss Lamb, 6-1 Deluxe Range, 7-1 Beat Box, 10-1 I Doubt That.

Thunderer's choice: Miss Lamb made all here last time on heavy going, looks to repeat the trick **Danger** Horn Cape

3.20 Handicap Chase (£8,344: 3m) (8)

1 44321 **TWOSHOTSOFTEQUILA** 27 (D) R Menzies 6-12-0 **N Moscrop**
2 32313 **TASTE THE FEAR** 27 (P,D) Dr R Newland 8-11-13 **C Hammond**
3 16540 **HOUSTON TEXAS** 33 (D) N Richards 9-11-12 **Sean Quinlan**
4 56040 **NICK LOST** 39 (P,T,D) J McConnell (Ire) 11-11-10 **B Hayes**
5 1640F **CAMP BELAN** 14 (P) L Russell 7-11-2 **D R Fox**
6 -5PPB **DONNA'S DELIGHT** 14 (P,D) A M Thomson 12-11-2 **R Mania**
7 21025 **AIRE VALLEY LAD** 16 (D) Sue Smith 9-10-8 **R Chapman**
8 35623 **GIPSY LEE ROSE** 2 (T,V,CD) N Alexander 9-10-5 **B Lynn (3)**

11-4 Twoshotsoftequila, 9-2 Camp Belan, 5-1 Houston Texas, 6-1 Nick Lost, 7-1 Taste The Fear, Aire Valley Lad, 12-1 Gipsy Lee Rose, Donna's Delight.

Thunderer's choice: Twoshotsoftequila had Taste The Fear back in third when winning at Doncaster **Danger** Taste The Fear

3.55 Handicap Hurdle (£4,330: 2m 7f) (6)

1 -3500 **ONE FER MAMMA** 14 (P) Paula Smith 7-12-0 **Emma Smith-Chaston (3)**
2 53301 **LISSEN TO THE LADY** 14 (P,CD) S Forster 9-11-12 **Miss J Walton (5)**
3 5/455 **BLAZING PORT** 11 N Alexander 8-11-7 **B Lynn (3)**
4 P1400 **ATOMIC ANGEL** 14 (CD) S Corbett 8-11-0 **S Coltherd**
5 -550P **ALONE NO MORE** 14 Mrs J Stephen 11-10-3 **Miss Lucy Brown**
6 66000 **BUTO** 16 (T,V) M Hammond 6-10-2 **C O'Farrell**

11-8 Lissen To The Lady, 15-8 Blazing Port, 8-1 One Fer Mamma, Atomic Angel, 10-1 Alone No More, 20-1 Buto.

Thunderer's choice: Lissen To The Lady showed a good attitude to win here a fortnight ago **Danger** Blazing Port

4.30 Handicap Chase (£7,182: 2m 4f) (8)

1 -4P52 **TREVELYN'S CORN** 14 (P,T) M Hammond 10-12-0 **Emma Smith-Chaston (3)**
2 24022 **PILEUP** 18 (P,BF) M Walford 6-11-13 **J Hamilton**
3 -6000 **THE WHITE VOLCANO** 2 W Storey 11-11-9 **R Chapman**
4 6-430 **EN MEME TEMPS** 64 (P,T) S Corbett 9-11-8 **S Coltherd**
5 0111P **EX S'ELANCE** 7 (P,CD) V Thompson 9-10-10 **T Dowson**
6 -0353 **BROOMFIELDS KAN** 14 (T) G Bewley 8-10-7 **J Bewley (3)**
7 -0546 **SHOUGHALL'S BOY** 53 (P) H Graham & G Rutherford 7-10-5 **E Austin (5)**
8 0000B **GET GOING** 14 (P) M Walford 6-10-3 **Sean Quinlan**

7-4 Pileup, 3-1 Trevelyn's Corn, 6-1 Ex S'elance, Shoughall's Boy, 8-1 Broomfields Kan, 14-1 Get Going, 16-1 En Meme Temps, 33-1 The White Volcano.

Thunderer's choice: Trevelyn's Corn has gone close in his previous two races here **Dangers** Pileup, Ex S'Elance

5.05 NH Flat Race (£2,614: 2m) (5)

1 2-2 **CHANCE THE ROBIN** 80 J McConnell (Ire) 6-11-4 **B Hayes**
2 04 **KNACKER TRAPPER** 12 A Crook 5-11-4 **J Kington**
3 50 **BLUEBELL GLEN** 31 N Alexander 5-10-11 **B Lynn (3)**
4 **QUEEN OF HINDSIGHT** D McCain 5-10-11 **Abbie McCain (5)**
5 6 **CAVE HILL** 41 I Duncan 4-10-8 **D R Fox**

4-7 Chance The Robin, 4-1 Queen Of Hindsight, 8-1 Bluebell Glen, 10-1 Knacker Trapper, 12-1 Cave Hill.

Thunderer's choice: Queen Of Hindsight was a cheap buy but she's well related. **Danger** Chance The Robin

Taunton

Thunderer

1.30 Spartan Army **3.50** Apple Rock
2.05 Fuji Rocks **4.25** Poet's Reflection
2.40 Art Decco (nap) **5.00** Johnnywho
3.15 Roscoe Tara

Going: soft-heavy in places **Racing TV**

1.30 Juvenile Hurdle (4-Y-O: £4,647: 2m 104yd) (7)

1 13245 **JILAIJONE** 20 (T) D Pipe 11-7 **P Armson (3)**
2 1525 **SPARTAN ARMY** 33 (D) A King 11-7 **A P Heskin**
3 5 **CALL ME ARTHUR** 58 T Lacey 11-0 **S Sheppard**
4 55 **FADED FANTASY** 10 Christian Williams 11-0 **N Scholfield**
5 00 **THE REBEL BREEN** 15 (P,T) Katy Price 11-0 **Charlie Price (3)**
6 P0 **LA REFERI** 10 (H) N Hawke 10-7 **T Buckley (3)**
7 **ONLY FOOLS** F186 (H,T) D Pipe 10-7 **J Tudor**

6-4 Spartan Army, 3-1 Only Fools, 7-2 Jilaijone, 7-1 Call Me Arthur, 8-1 Faded Fantasy, 50-1 The Rebel Breen, 66-1 La Referi.

2.05 Maiden Hurdle (£4,753: 2m 104yd) (10)

1 6 **CLINTON LANE** 79 M Gillard 5-11-6 **F Gillard (3)**
2 4/252 **DONNIE AZOFF** 22 J Snowden 7-11-6 **G Sheehan**
3 236 **FEVER DREAM** 10 Christian Williams 5-11-6 **J Tudor**
4 3360U **FUJI ROCKS** 7 (T) F O'Brien 6-11-6 **P Brennan**
5 20 **HAMMER DAN** 10 (T) D Pipe 5-11-6 **N Scholfield**
6 32/4 **MOYTIER** 40 Syd Hosie 6-11-6 **Mr G Hiscock (7)**
7 0545 **RIVERS CORNER** 33 Syd Hosie 5-11-6 **J Best**
8 40 **SECRET PLAN** 93 E Williams 5-11-6 **A Wedge**
9 6 **GARDONS LA** 327 N Mulholland 5-10-13 **A P Heskin**
10 204 **SAM'S AMOUR** 22 K Burke 6-10-13 **H Kimber (3)**

5-4 Donnie Azoff, 3-1 Fuji Rocks, 8-1 Fever Dream, 10-1 Gardons La, 12-1 Moytier, 14-1 Hammer Dan, 20-1 Secret Plan, Sam's Amour.

2.40 Handicap Chase (£6,496: 2m 7f) (6)

1 -14F1 **GARINCHA** 22 (P) N Mulholland 7-12-0 **A Wedge**
2 002PP **BRAZOS** 20 Alexandra Dunn 9-12-0 **N Scholfield**
3 4-234 **MUMBO JUMBO** 48 (T) E Lavelle 7-11-11 **J A Anderson (7)**
4 -0231 **ART DECCO** 60 R Walford 7-11-1 **H Cobden**
5 13235 **DIEGOS WAY** 26 (P) C Collins (Ire) 10-11-0 **S Bowen**
6 51641 **HALDON HILL** 25 (P,T) V Dartnall 10-10-10 **A Johns**

11-4 Garincha, 3-1 Art Decco, 7-2 Haldon Hill, 4-1 Mumbo Jumbo, 6-1 Diegos Way, 20-1 Brazos.

3.15 Handicap Hurdle (£5,017: 2m 3f) (6)

1 36462 **BALKO SAINT** 40 Mrs J Williams 6-12-1 **Mr P Summers (7)**
2 1-13P **OPERATION MANNA** 33 (D) T Lacey 7-11-12 **S Sheppard**
3 0/651 **EARTH KING** 34 (D) N Mulholland 7-11-12 **A P Heskin**
4 -2521 **DECORATED** 118 (T) O Signy 5-11-7 **G Sheehan**
5 4-566 **OXYGEN** 49 V Williams 5-11-1 **N Fox (7)**
6 0453/ **ROSCOE TARA** 730 A King 8-10-11 **H Cobden**

11-4 Decorated, 3-1 Balko Saint, 100-30 Earth King, 6-1 Operation Manna, Oxygen, 10-1 Roscoe Tara.

3.50 Handicap Hurdle (£7,288: 3m) (5)

1 461-1 **MR TAMBOURINE MAN** 318 D Pipe 6-12-0 **J Tudor**
2 -1116 **APPLE ROCK** 40 (CD) B Pauling 9-11-13 **Luca Morgan**
3 U4036 **GUERNESEY** 22 Joe Tizzard 7-11-8 **H Kimber (3)**
4 -2252 **IBERIO** 20 (P,C) P Hobbs & J White 6-10-12 **M G Nolan**
5 61-4F **MY LAST OSCAR** 8 (CD) Nicky Martin 8-10-10 **D Prichard (5)**

2-1 Mr Tambourine Man, 5-2 Iberio, 3-1 Apple Rock, 7-1 Guernesey, 8-1 My Last Oscar.

4.25 Handicap Chase (£5,439: 2m) (6)

1 24635 **PRIME PRETENDER** 8 (V) E Williams 8-12-0 **Isabel Williams**
2 5P4B0 **TREASURE DILLON** 7 (V) E Williams 9-11-2 **A Wedge**
3 304-6 **POET'S REFLECTION** 330 Miss L Blackford 8-11-0 **Sean Houlihan**
4 0-002 **HOWYOUPLAYTHEGAME** 18 S Allwood 7-11-0 **C Todd**
5 -P00P **PENCIL** 28 (H) Nicky Martin 6-10-12 **J Best**
6 00050 **FLASH GORCOMBE** 51 R Walford 6-10-8 **Paul O'Brien**

11-4 Howyouplaythegame, 3-1 Prime Pretender, 7-2 Treasure Dillon, 5-1 Poet's Reflection, 6-1 Flash Gorcombe, 12-1 Pencil.

5.00 NH Flat Race (£2,640: 2m 104yd) (10)

1 4- **BHALOO** 376 (W,T) F O'Brien 5-11-6 **L Harrison (3)**
2 **DISH OF THE DAY** Nicky Martin 5-11-6 **Paul O'Brien**
3 4 **I AM NO RISK** 31 O Murphy 5-11-6 **S Bowen**
4 **JACOBS ACRE** (T) N Mulholland 5-11-6 **A P Heskin**
5 1- **JOHNNYWHO** 515 Jonjo O'Neill 6-11-6 **Jonjo O'Neill Jr**
6 35 **KRUGER PARK** 33 P Nicholls 5-11-6 **L Williams**
7 32 **PENTIRE HEAD** 79 (BF) P Nicholls 5-11-6 **H Cobden**
8 50 **STANCHESKI** 166 A Newcombe 5-11-6 **H Kimber (3)**
9 **GETUPTHEYARD** N Hawke 4-10-10 **T Buckley (3)**
10 243 **MR MACKAY** 53 (BF) N Twiston-Davies 4-10-10 **J Nailor**

3-1 Johnnywho, 7-2 Pentire Head, 4-1 Mr Mackay, 6-1 Bhaloo, 7-1 I Am No Risk, 10-1 Kruger Park, 12-1 Jacobs Acre, 14-1 Dish Of The Day.

Warwick

Thunderer

1.50 Carrarea **4.10** Midnight Ginger
2.25 Boys Of Wexford **4.45** Zamparelli
3.00 Stellar Stream **5.15** Elle Est Beau
3.35 Saint Segal **5.45** Diamond Ri

Going: good to soft-soft in places on hurdle course **Racing TV**

1.50 Maiden Hurdle (£4,084: 2m 5f) (11)

1 236-2 **CARRAREA** 209 (T,BF) M Walford 6-11-7 **D Jacob**
2 3400P **DR LOCKDOWN** 15 D J Jeffreys 6-11-7 **M Kendrick**
3 4225P **GAELIC PARK** 19 C Longsdon 7-11-7 **B Roberts (7)**
4 112P0 **GARCON DARGENT** 8 Deborah Cole 6-11-7 **C Ward (3)**
5 0 **INTEL DES BRUYERES** 48 S Thomas 5-11-7 **S Twiston-Davies**
6 2/25 **KANKIN** 48 A Hales 7-11-7 **H Bannister**
7 56 **MORNING LINE** 38 N Henderson 5-11-7 **N De Boinville**
8 505 **TABLE THIRTY FOUR** 25 (T) E Lavelle 6-11-7 **T Bellamy**
9 60 **WONDER OF THE SEAS** 66 N Twiston-Davies 5-11-7 **Mr J Neild (7)**
10 0-06U **CASSOWARY** 24 (P) Andrew Martin 5-11-0 **J Martin (7)**
11 20 **GRUMPY ROSIE** 17 Chris Honour 4-10-2 **D Noonan**

1-2 Carrarea, 3-1 Gaelic Park, 12-1 Morning Line, 16-1 Intel Des Bruyeres, 20-1 Table Thirty Four, Kankin, 33-1 Grumpy Rosie, 66-1 others.

2.25 Handicap Chase (£4,225: 2m 4f) (9)

1 -114P **WALK IN THE WILD** 12 (D) G L Moore 7-12-2 **N F Houlihan (3)**
2 3-2PP **BLACKCAUSEWAY** 126 (T) N Twiston-Davies 7-11-13 **S Twiston-Davies**
3 -0136 **CONCEAL** 94 (P,D) Billy Aprahamian 8-11-5 **H Bannister**
4 5P033 **JACK DOYEN** 28 (P) B Case 7-11-4 **J Quinlan**
5 -54PP **PHIL THE SOCK** 25 (B,T) B Pauling 6-11-2 **T Cannon**
6 -0123 **BOYS OF WEXFORD** 18 (D) Henry Oliver 6-11-2 **D Noonan**
7 -0PP0 **CHECKITSME** 45 (W,T) Cynthia Woods 6-10-2 **Tabitha Worsley (3)**
8 0P3PP **NYOUFSEA** 8 (P) A Sadik 8-10-2 **A Edwards**
9 064-3 **DUN BAY CREEK** 292 (P) R Brotherton 12-10-2 **B Poste**

6-4 Boys Of Wexford, 4-1 Walk In The Wild, 5-1 Jack Doyen, 11-2 Blackcauseway, 8-1 Conceal, 20-1 Phil The Sock, Checkitsme, 50-1 Nyoufsea, Dun Bay Creek.

3.00 Handicap Hurdle (£4,225: 3m 2f) (9)

1 11-21 **BLADE RUNNER** 136 (P) C Gordon 7-12-2 **T Cannon**
2 1-641 **STELLAR STREAM** 43 (D) K Woollacott 6-12-1 **B Godfrey (3)**
3 0-461 **GLANCE FROM CLOVER** 8 (P,CD) A Ralph 8-12-0(7ex) **J Tidball (7)**
4 5-605 **CAFE PUSHKIN** 34 (P) N Twiston-Davies 7-11-7 **S Twiston-Davies**
5 01001 **BRAGANZA BAY** 25 (B,D) H Daly 6-11-3 **R Patrick**
6 2P26P **DOIREANN** 13 (T) S Edmunds 6-11-0 **C Gethings**
7 04006 **DARK DUOMO** 20 (B,T) P Hobbs & J White 5-10-8 **B R Jones**
8 0P6P0 **BEANNAIGH DO** 43 (H) Sheila Lewis 6-10-2 **Shane Quinlan (3)**
9 43/5P **MR PALMTREE** 34 (P,T) Harriet Dickin 10-10-2 **B Poste**

2-1 Blade Runner, 3-1 Glance From Clover, 4-1 Stellar Stream, 6-1 Braganza Bay, 12-1 Cafe Pushkin, Doireann, 14-1 Dark Duomo, 50-1 Beannaigh Do, Mr Palmtree.

3.35 Handicap Chase (£10,562: 2m) (7)

1 -1U24 **LAC DE CONSTANCE** 19 (T) D Skelton 7-12-1 **H Skelton**
2 65112 **SAINT SEGAL** 62 (T,BF,D) Mrs J Williams 5-11-12 **D Noonan**
3 1F-53 **RED ROOKIE** 54 (BF,D) E Lavelle 8-11-11 **T Bellamy**
4 -2603 **HASANKEY** 43 (V,D) L Morgan 7-11-9 **L Dobb (7)**
5 F506P **ROUGE VIF** 12 (P,T,CD) H Whittington 9-11-8 **D Jacob**
6 -4241 **BUN DORAN** 42 (P,T,D) T R George 12-11-5 **J J Burke**
7 -3011 **GRANDEUR D'AME** 17 (D) A King 7-11-1 **T Cannon**

2-1 Saint Segal, 4-1 Grandeur D'ame, 9-2 Lac De Constance, 6-1 Bun Doran, 7-1 Red Rookie, 10-1 Rouge Vif, 12-1 Hasankey.

Blinkered first time: Hexham 2.10 Moonacura. **Warwick** 2.25 Phil The Sock. 3.00 Dark Duomo.

4.10 Handicap Hurdle (£5,809: 2m) (5)

1 -0P3F **IDEAL PAL** 42 (P,T,D) C Collins (Ire) 7-12-2 **L Stones (5)**
2 -2315 **MIDNIGHT GINGER** 58 (D) Andrew Martin 7-12-0 **J Martin (7)**
3 -U421 **MAYHEM MYA** 23 (D) Chris Honour 6-11-13 **Doubtful**
4 22353 **KRYPTON GOLD** 22 (D) S Edmunds 5-11-8 **C Gethings**
5 10360 **LIPA K** 51 (BF) E Williams 5-10-7 **C Ring (3)**

2-1 Lipa K, 9-4 Midnight Ginger, 11-4 Ideal Pal, 9-2 Krypton Gold.

4.45 Open Hunters' Chase (£2,053: 2m 4f) (8)

1 2-51P **ZAMPARELLI** 53 (B,T,D) Miss V Collins 11-12-2 **Mr Toby McCain-Mitchell (7)**
2 60F/2 **BALLOTIN** 12 (D) Anthony Ward-Thomas 12-11-12 **Mr M McIntyre (3)**
3 P-201 **FIRAK** 11 (T) N A Pearce 8-11-12 **Mr Sean O'Connor (7)**
4 -P34P **GABORIOT** 13 (B) Oliver Greenall & Josh Guerriero 7-11-12 **Mr George Cowley (7)**
5 P-PP4 **SENDING LOVE** 17 (T) Miss Dawn Ball 10-11-12 **Mr Billy Chatterton (7)**
6 P3P6P **URBANIST** 7 (V) R J Holmes 11-11-12 **Miss Ellie Holder (7)**
7 -26P6 **WHAT A GLANCE** 18 (T) Tom Britten 8-11-12 **Mr Z Baker**
8 1P63F **ZEE MAN** 13 F Hutsby 9-11-12 **Mr J King**

7-4 Zamparelli, 3-1 Ballotin, 7-2 Firak, 5-1 Gaboriot, 20-1 Zee Man, What A Glance, Sending Love, 50-1 Urbanist.

5.15 NH Flat Race (Div I: £2,178: 2m) (10)

1 **MONBARI** R Curtis 5-11-6 **T Bellamy**
2 **EDE'IFFS ROCK** W G M Turner 5-10-13 **B Ffrench-Davis (7)**
3 **ELLE EST BEAU** D Skelton 5-10-13 **H Skelton**
4 **COASTAL ROCK** H Fry 4-10-10 **J J Burke**
5 **JAPON DE CARJAC** (W) P Webber 4-10-10 **D Jacob**
6 **SOLAR SYSTEM** P Hobbs & J White 4-10-10 **B R Jones**
7 **STRACKAN** H Daly 4-10-10 **R Patrick**
8 **VISCOUNT VINYL** Joe Tizzard 4-10-10 **B J Powell**
9 **WILLSBURG** O Signy 4-10-10 **S Twiston-Davies**
10 **LOOKING AS YOU ARE** A Hales 4-10-3 **H Bannister**

11-4 Elle Est Beau, 4-1 Solar System, 5-1 Coastal Rock, 7-1 Viscount Vinyl, 8-1 Monbari, 10-1 Willsburg, 12-1 Strackan, Japon De Carjac.

5.45 NH Flat Race (Div II: £2,178: 2m) (9)

1 **MIX AND MATCH** A Hales 5-11-6 **H Bannister**
2 **TOUCH OF THUNDER** C Poulton 5-11-6 **T Cannon**
3 **BOUNDARY JACK** M Rowley 4-10-10 **A Edwards**
4 **DIAMOND RI** Joe Tizzard 4-10-10 **B J Powell**
5 **GEEZER ROCKSTAR** H Fry 4-10-10 **J J Burke**
6 **GLOBE PLAYER** S Edmunds 4-10-10 **C Gethings**
7 **PEARL ISLAND** H Daly 4-10-10 **R Patrick**
8 **SINNARAJA** R L Llewellyn 4-10-10 **M Bastyan**
9 **TOUT SUR MOI** Mrs J Williams 4-10-10 **D Noonan**

11-4 Diamond Ri, 7-2 Geezer Rockstar, 4-1 Tout Sur Moi, 6-1 Pearl Island, 10-1 Mix And Match, 12-1 Globe Player, 14-1 others.

Wolverhampton

Thunderer

5.30 Cedar Cage **7.30** Churchill Rose
6.00 Fayasel **8.00** Oh Herberts Reign
6.30 Calin's Lad **8.30** Shining Crystal
7.00 Bussento

Going: standard **Sky Sports Racing**
Draw: 7f, low numbers best

5.30 Handicap (£4,292: 1m 6f) (8)

1 (3) 0040/ **GOOD TIME AHEAD** J9 (C,D) J & S Best 9-10-3 **A Brookes (3)**
2 (2) 155-6 **LEOPOLDS ROCK** 23 (P) P Kirby 7-10-1 **Madi Patzelt (7)**
3 (4) 0-003 **CEDAR CAGE** 12 (H) D Shaw 6-10-1 **George Eddery (7)**
4 (6) 5-400 **SOCIAL CITY** 16 (CD) A Carroll 7-10-1 **Mollie Phillips**
5 (7) 12316 **BASCINET** 22 (BF,CD) E J-Houghton 4-9-13 **Mia Nicholls (7)**
6 (8) 12250 **WINKLEVI** 26 (CD) P Evans 8-9-12 **S Osborne**
7 (5) /40-0 **BONDI MAN** 23 Sarah Hollinshead 4-9-8 **Gina Mangan (3)**
8 (1) 050-0 **FANDABIDOZI** 17 (T) G Hanmer 5-9-4 **Laura Pearson**

11-4 Cedar Cage, 3-1 Bascinet, 9-2 Good Time Ahead, 7-1 Leopolds Rock, Winklevi, 10-1 Social City, 14-1 Bondi Man, 16-1 Fandabidozi.

6.00 Handicap (3-Y-O: £4,292: 7f) (10)

1 (9) 325-6 **WE'RENOTREALLYHERE** 66 J J Quinn 9-9 **D Swift**
2 (3) -5523 **OLYMPIC QUEST** 20 C Cox 9-9 **J Fahy**
3 (6) 4-541 **FAYASEL** 26 (CD) M Murphy & M Keady 9-9 **D Muscutt**
4 (7) -1113 **TENNESSEE DREAM** 51 (CD) C Hills 9-7 **K Shoemark**
5 (1) 25-16 **PHOENIX GLOW** 20 Jack Channon 9-6 **G Bass (3)**
6 (5) 020-5 **MR GLOVERMAN** 37 K Frost 9-6 **J Mitchell**
7 (10) 51422 **ROSSMORE NATION** 14 (T) M Appleby 9-5 **David Egan**
8 (2) 405 **TIMEDTOPERFECTION** 15 R Fahey 9-4 **Oisin Orr**
9 (4) 0655 **SPARKS FLY** 26 D Loughnane 9-3 **Rossa Ryan**
10 (8) -1000 **MADE OF LIR** 15 S England 9-1 **Joanna Mason**

9-4 Fayasel, 9-2 Olympic Quest, 6-1 Rossmore Nation, 7-1 We'renotreallyhere, 8-1 Phoenix Glow, 10-1 Tennessee Dream, 12-1 Mr Gloverman, Sparks Fly.

6.30 Handicap (£4,292: 7f) (9)

1 (5) 30-34 **MOTAWAAFEQ** 59 (P,CD) M Appleby 7-9-11 **A Rawlinson**
2 (1) 66-30 **ALWAYS FEARLESS** 61 (B,D) R Hannon 6-9-6 **S M Levey**
3 (2) 0460- **BULLS AYE** J42 (V,D) I Jardine 5-9-6 **A Mullen**
4 (9) 54506 **FIELDSMAN** 16 (CD) A Carroll 11-9-5 **Mollie Phillips (3)**
5 (4) 2-335 **CALIN'S LAD** 22 (D) A Carroll 8-9-5 **O Murphy**
6 (6) 5-606 **GAME NATION** 34 J Osborne 4-9-4 **S Osborne**
7 (3) 0-005 **KODIAC SIGN** 27 (T) P Evans 4-9-2 **Rossa Ryan**
8 (7) 0-550 **TWILIGHT REVENGE** 20 (D) M Usher 4-8-6 **H Turner**
9 (8) 000-0 **BELEAGUERMENT** 62 (D) H D McGuigan 7-8-4 **L Morris**

11-4 Motawaafeq, 100-30 Calin's Lad, 5-1 Always Fearless, 6-1 Beleaguerment, 10-1 Bulls Aye, Game Nation, 14-1 others.

7.00 Novice Stakes (3-Y-O: £9,504: 1m 1f) (6)

1 (3) 1- **CICERO'S GIFT** 160 C Hills 9-11 **K Shoemark**
2 (5) 432- **BUSSENTO** 194 E J-Houghton 9-4 **C Bishop**
3 (6) 0- **YELLOW LION** 153 R Hannon 9-4 **S M Levey**
4 (4) 2- **DOCKLANDS** 237 Harry Eustace 9-2 **H Turner**
5 (2) **FIVE WINDS** Jack Jones 8-13 **D E Hogan**
6 (1) 50 **SEAHRENA** 19 A Watson 8-13 **L Morris**

5-4 Bussento, 2-1 Cicero's Gift, 7-2 Docklands, 16-1 Seahrena, 25-1 Yellow Lion, 33-1 Five Winds.

7.30 Handicap (3-Y-O: £4,292: 1m 1f) (9)

1 (1) 002 **PAPAL MUSIC** 36 C Cox 9-11 **A Kirby**
2 (8) 32323 **EVOLICATT** 21 (V) P Evans 9-10 **Jordan Williams (5)**
3 (2) 6-63 **FLAME OF KODIAC** 14 J & T Gosden 9-9 **R Havlin**
4 (7) 0-024 **LADY BIANCA** 40 J Osborne 9-9 **S Osborne**
5 (4) 4055- **MOLTISANTI** 167 D Loughnane 9-9 **Rossa Ryan**
6 (5) 022-6 **DEE'S DREAM** 20 M Attwater 9-8 **W Carson**
7 (3) 054-5 **CLIMATE PRECEDENT** 16 (BF) M Bell 9-8 **O Murphy**
8 (9) 3306- **ROYAL ATHENA** 161 T Ward 9-6 **S M Levey**
9 (6) 0-60 **CHURCHILL ROSE** 20 (H) C Fellowes 9-1 **K Shoemark**

9-4 Flame Of Kodiac, 9-2 Climate Precedent, 6-1 Lady Bianca, Evolicatt, 8-1 Papal Music, 12-1 Moltisanti, Churchill Rose, Royal Athena, 14-1 Dee's Dream.

8.00 Handicap (£7,642: 1m 1f) (7)

1 (1) 5436- **LAST HOORAH** 226 A Watson 4-9-7 **L Morris**
2 (2) 150-0 **DYNAMIC TALENT** 54 (B,T,C) Darryll Holland 4-9-7 **Jason Watson**
3 (5) 06411 **ATHMAD** 20 (B,CD) R Carr 7-9-6 **P Mulrennan**
4 (6) 06-24 **SOAMES FORSYTE** 30 (H) M Herrington 4-9-6 **D Muscutt**
5 (3) -4061 **YOUNG FIRE** 12 (V,CD) D O'Meara 8-9-5 **Mark Winn (5)**
6 (4) 114-0 **DOUBLE TIME** 28 (T) Sir M Todd 5-9-4 **O Murphy**
7 (7) 42-34 **OH HERBERTS REIGN** 14 R Hannon 4-9-4 **S M Levey**

11-4 Athmad, 3-1 Young Fire, 5-1 Oh Herberts Reign, 11-2 Double Time, 7-1 Soames Forsyte, 10-1 Dynamic Talent, Last Hoorah.

8.30 Classified Stakes (£4,428: 1m 1f) (13)

1 (13) 60-50 **APFELSTRUDEL** 50 H Spiller 4-9-2 **C Howarth (5)**
2 (9) 00024 **BALLET BLANC** 26 (P) R J Price 4-9-2 **O Murphy**
3 (4) -0030 **BOOK OF VERSE** 33 (B,T) H Spiller 5-9-2 **R Coakley**
4 (5) 0-013 **BUACHAILL** 12 (H,CD) Mrs Stella Barclay 4-9-2 **C Rodriguez**
5 (10) -0430 **CONNIE R** 27 (P) M Herrington 4-9-2 **T Eaves**
6 (1) 00020 **GOOD HUMOR** 13 (H,T) J Butler 6-9-2 **D Keenan**
7 (3) 0-604 **LE BAYOU** 26 (B) I W McInnes 6-9-2 **L Edmunds**
8 (7) 12056 **NON MOLLARE** 3 (BF) D Bourke 6-9-2 **Rossa Ryan**
9 (8) 00-60 **OUR DICKIE** 21 (D) I Jardine 4-9-2 **A Mullen**
10 (12) -0023 **SHINING CRYSTAL** 14 (P,BF) Alice Haynes 4-9-2 **K O'Neill**
11 (6) 15306 **SIX STRINGS** 12 (H,CD) D Shaw 9-9-2 **C Hardie**
12 (11) -3552 **SOMEDAYONEDAYNEVER** 13 (B) A Carroll 4-9-2 **L Morris**
13 (2) /000- **SUN RISING** 183 Craig Lidster 4-9-2 **B Robinson**

7-2 Shining Crystal, 5-1 Non Mollare, 6-1 Good Humor, 7-1 Buachaill, 8-1 Ballet Blanc, 10-1 Somedayonedaynever, Le Bayou, 12-1 Our Dickie.

Course specialists

Hexham: Trainers Jedd O'Keeffe, 8 winners from 15 runners, 53.3%; J McConnell, 3 from 7, 42.9%; Dr R Newland, 8 from 27, 29.6%. **Jockeys** C Hammond, 7 winners from 16 rides, 43.8%; T Midgley, 7 from 37, 18.9%; B Garritty, 6 from 32, 18.8%.

Taunton: Trainers N Martin, 4 from 12, 33.3%; P Nicholls, 45 from 154, 29.2%; O Murphy, 10 from 48, 20.8%. **Jockeys** H Cobden, 35 from 122, 28.7%; L Harrison, 3 from 11, 27.3%; S Sheppard, 5 from 21, 23.8%.

Warwick: Trainers L Morgan, 3 from 5, 60%; Mrs J Williams, 8 from 25, 32%; Sheila Lewis, 5 from 18, 27.8%. **Jockeys** B Powell, 11 from 48, 22.9%; H Skelton, 44 from 193, 22.8%; J J Burke, 17 from 77, 22.1%.

Wolverhampton: Trainers J & T Gosden, 11 from 59, 18.6%; C Hills, 20 from 113, 17.7%; Sir Mark Todd, 5 from 29, 17.2%. **Jockeys** O Murphy, 43 from 167, 25.7%; O Orr, 6 from 28, 21.4%; J Mitchell, 79 from 392, 20.2%.

Yesterday's racing results

Lingfield Park

Going: standard

1.35 (7f 1yd) 1, **A Taste Of Honey** (L Morris, 4-1); 2, The Toff (14-1); 3, Buy The Dip (17-2). 9 ran. 1¼l, 2¼l. A Watson.

2.10 (7f 1yd) 1, **Divine Messenger** (C Hutchinson, 4-1); 2, Ballybaymoonshiner (5-2 fav); 3, Shabs (3-1). 11 ran. NR: Griggy, Send In The Clouds. 1¼l, hd. Emma Owen.

2.45 (6f 1yd) 1, **Gold Medal** (H Burns, 6-1); 2, Thismydream (7-2); 3, Lilkian (7-2). 9 ran. NR: Pinwheel. ¾l, ½l. Dylan Cunha.

3.20 (7f 1yd) 1, **Arctician** (L Morris, 15-2); 2, Brunel Charm (12-1); 3, Wyvern (9-5 fav). 8 ran. NR: Marlay Park. 1¼l, sh hd. S Dow.

3.55 (1m 2f) 1, **Dasho Lennie** (R Havlin, 7-4 fav); 2, Edge Of Ember (11-4); 3, Charlie's Choice (18-1). 8 ran. NR: Fravanco, Maso Bastie, Tables Turned. Hd, 5½l. S P C Woods.

4.30 (1m 2f) 1, **Star Of Epsom** (P Bradley, 5-2); 2, Captain Pugwash (11-2); 3, Pittsburg (9-4 fav). 6 ran. Sh hd, sh hd. P Phelan.

5.00 (1m 2f) 1, **Masqool** (D C Costello, 7-1); 2, Marion's Boy (6-1); 3, Goldsmith (11-4 fav). 7 ran. NR: New Shepard. Nk, 1l. H J Evans.

Placepot: £32.60. Quadpot: £7.90.

Market Rasen

Going: good to soft (soft in places)

1.25 (2m 125yd hdle) 1, **Eclair D'Ainay** (H Skelton, 1-8 fav); 2, Artic Breeze (66-1); 3, Hero (11-2). 27l, 1l. D Skelton.

2.00 (2m 1f 43yd ch) 1, **Zara's Universe** (J Kington, 5-2); 2, Izzy's Champion (4-1); 3, Torrent Des Mottes (18-1). 5 ran. 4½l, 17l. A Crook.

2.35 (2m 3f 34yd ch) 1, **Grandads Cottage** (S Bowen, 5-6 fav); 2, The King Of May (100-30); 3, Leskinfere (150-1). 5 ran. NR: Viva Lavilla. 2¾l, 13l. O Murphy.

3.10 (2m 125yd hdle) 1, **Superstylin** (M G Nolan, 5-4 fav); 2, Starvoski (7-1); 3, Dickens (18-5). 6 ran. NR: Inferno Sacree. 14l, 2l. Miss S Smith.

3.45 (2m 7f 16yd hdle) 1, **Broadway Boy** (J Nailor, 3-1); 2, Jubilee Express (4-1); 3, Shighness (5-1). 6 ran. 2¾l, 15l. N A Twiston-Davies.

4.20 (2m 4f 139yd hdle) 1, **Ghasham** (S Bowen, 4-1); 2, Awesome Foursome (3-1); 3, Black Lightning (12-1). 6 ran. 4l, 7l. Ian Williams.

4.53 (2m 125yd Flat) 1, **Katate Dori** (S Twiston-Davies, 8-13 fav); 2, Hiero Sport (18-1); 3, The Kalooki Kid (6-1). 8 ran. NR: Booster Bob. 1¾l, 2¼l. S Thomas.

Placepot: £27.00. Quadpot: £11.80.

Newcastle

Going: heavy

1.15 (2m 7f 149yd hdle) 1, **Howzat Hiris** (J Thompson, 6-1); 2, Pipers Cross (5-2 fav); 3, Something Golden (9-2). 7 ran. 4l, 4½l. Micky Hammond.

1.50 (2m 190yd hdle) 1, **Cold Sobar** (S Coltherd, 13-2); 2, It's Dan (40-1); 3, Jersay Du Trottet (4-1). 7 ran. 13l, 1¾l. W Coltherd.

2.25 (2m 4f 19yd ch) 1, **Lisloran** (R Chapman, 9-4); 2, Caboy (6-4 fav); 3, Economic Editor (9-2). 5 ran. 4l, 7½l. R Ross.

3.00 (2m 4f 62yd hdle) 1, **Miah Grace** (C O'Farrell, 8-1); 2, Castle Rushen (11-4); 3, Aramax (12-1). 6 ran. NR: Cerendipity. 2¼l, ½l. Jedd O'Keeffe.

3.35 (2m 75yd ch) 1, **One Mill Harbour** (D R Fox, 3-1); 2, Gallic Geordie (2-1); 3, Marshalled (11-1). 4 ran. NR: Fabrique En France. 1½l, 9l. Miss Lucinda V Russell.

4.10 (2m 4f 62yd hdle) 1, **Our Laura B** (J Hogan, 85-40); 2, Farne Island (15-2); 3, Misscarlett (2-1 fav). 6 ran. NR: Your Place. 3¾l, 5½l. B Haslam.

4.45 (2m 190yd hdle) 1, **Chumlee** (P W Wadge, 9-2); 2, Fathers Advice (4-1); 3, Magic Mike (10-1). 8 ran. NR: Click And Collect, Eddie Mush. 10l, 2½l. Miss S E Forster.

Placepot: £8,320.20.
Quadpot: £55.80.

Kempton Park

Going: standard/slow

5.30 (1m) 1, **Dutch Kingdom** (J Watson, 8-1); 2, Saturnalia (16-5 fav); 3, Kitaro Kich (10-1). 9 ran. Nk, 1¼l. Darryll Holland.

6.00 (7f) 1, **Deceiver** (Rossa Ryan, 3-1); 2, Cue's Beau (100-1); 3, Naaser (10-11 fav). 14 ran. 1l, 3¼l. D & C Kubler.

6.30 (6f) 1, **Alpha Zulu** (Oisin Murphy, 8-13 fav); 2, Peony (17-2); 3, Mojeyrr (11-2). 10 ran. 1½l, nk. J Ferguson.

7.00 (7f) 1, **Restrict** (Hayley Turner, 4-1); 2, Little Edi (4-1); 3, Gulmarg (4-1). 7 ran. nk, 1¼l. D M Simcock.

7.30 (7f) 1, **Mount Athos** (J Doyle, 8-11 fav; **Thunderer's nap**); 2, Rhythm Master (6-1); 3, Vafortino (11-2). 8 ran. NR: Spirit Of Nguru. 2¼l, nk. J Tate.

8.00 (1m 7f 218yd) 1, **Novel Legend** (D Muscutt, 13-8 fav); 2, First Emperor (4-1); 3, Grandmaster Flash (50-1). 7 ran. 1¼l, ¾l. J R Fanshawe.

8.30 (6f) 1, **Sir Rodneyredblood** (D Probert, 13-2); 2, Mustaffiz (11-2); 3, My Opinion (66-1). 10 ran. 3¼l, ½l. J R Jenkins.

Placepot: £21.30. Quadpot: £9.60.

Mike Atherton
Chief Cricket Correspondent



Cricket's time in US has arrived, but at what cost to English game?

Houston, we have a problem. Well, not quite yet at any rate. Major League Cricket (MLC), to be played a three-hour drive from Houston in Grand Prairie, Texas, for a month in July, is the latest incarnation of the cricketing entrepreneurial streak that has hitherto foundered on the rock that is America. English cricket will be watching nervously this time.

When you've been around a while, hair starting to grey and limbs aching in a morning, very little in cricket is new under the sun. I can recall numerous attempts to give the game a firm financial push across the pond: Allen Stanford, the disgraced financier, had a crack, even Shane Warne and Sachin Tendulkar had a go. This time — in the words that every successful investor is taught to be wary of — it may be different.

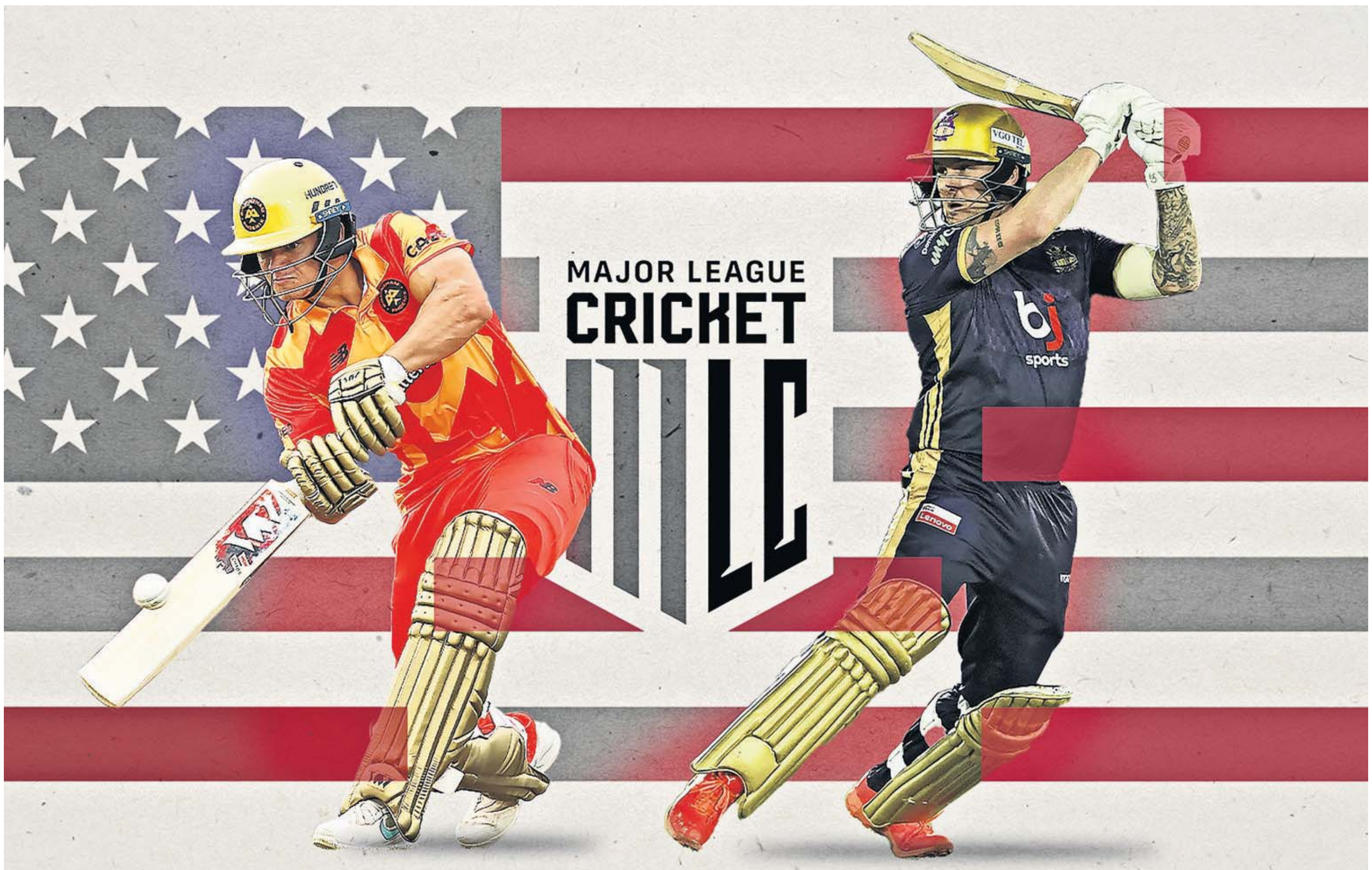
Nothing transformational has happened thus far. The game, once popular in the United States in the 19th century but sent to the margins by dint of its Englishness, has pottered along, played by immigrants from the West Indies and South Asia in the main. There have been significant steps, for sure, but the game has been held back by administrative bickering and a lack of mainstream interest.

But the hope has never stopped flickering. As a broadcast market, it remains the third-most lucrative for England and Australia; about five million immigrants from South Asia mean its playing resource could be as big as the Caribbean or New Zealand and, as cricket has thrummed to the beat of the free market after the Indian Premier League (IPL), it has always been foolish to discount the potential of the most gung-ho free market there is.

With the IPL franchises using the windfall from their vast domestic television deal to spread their wings into different territories — the United Arab Emirates, South Africa and the Caribbean — it was only a matter of time before the attraction of America lured them in. Of the six new franchises in MLC, four have stakes bought by IPL teams — New York by Mumbai Indians, Texas by Chennai Super Kings, and Los Angeles by Kolkata Knight Riders, while Delhi Capitals part-own the Seattle team with Satya Nadella of Microsoft.

These days, when the IPL owners make a play, it is sensible to take note. As the IPL prepares for its 16th season, the tournament is the second most valuable television sporting property on a per-game basis in the world. Set against it, the cricketing competition (in financial terms) is feeble: few other domestic franchised tournaments make a profit and legacy institutions and administrators have responsibilities to be more than a cash machine.

More than that, after the MLC's inaugural season, America will have the tailwind of its first ICC global tournament, to be held in the summer of 2024, when the T20 World Cup will be jointly hosted by Cricket West Indies and USA Cricket. A third of the matches will be played in America with all the infrastructure boost and spending that comes with a global event, not to mention a guaranteed qualification as a co-host. Infrastructure will be key.



English white-ball specialists such as Smeed, left, and Roy, right, could well be tempted to play in the new American competition if the calendar allows

Why the nervousness here? The first, and most obvious, reason is timing: although international cricket has encroached more and more on the English summer, which used to have a monopoly over the calendar for four months, franchise tournaments have largely avoided a clash with the high summer months of June and July. MLC happens right in the middle of the English summer and has already attracted some big names who might otherwise have been bound for the Hundred.

England-contracted cricketers will not be allowed to go, nor those multi-format county players who are on red-ball and white-ball deals. But, if it takes place in between the Blast and the Hundred, what about the growing number of white-ball specialists, such as Alex Hales, Will Smeed and Tymal Mills? It would be hard to deny No Objection Certificates and then, if the price is right, would that encourage more young players down the Smeed route, ignoring first-class cricket altogether? The price offered for one of the biggest names in one-day cricket, Jason Roy — now on an incremental contract only with England — was reported in newspapers this week to be in the region of £300,000 over a two-year period.

The push in America comes at an interesting time in the English game, with a new administration in the shape of the two Richards — Gould and Thompson — at the ECB and a financial review from Fanos Hira, the Worcestershire chairman, nipping at their heels.

It is not yet clear what vision Thompson or Gould have for a rapidly changing game. Some have argued that added competition is bad for the ECB's flagship commercial tournament, the Hundred, and that pressure will come to bear on either that or the T20 Blast. I suspect it will only accelerate the move to private investment here, as bilateral international cricket declines in interest and revenues fall and franchises crowd the calendar.

All went quiet very quickly last summer after Mark Kleinman, Sky's city editor, broke a story that there had been a £300 million offer made by the private equity group Bridgepoint for a 75 per cent stake in the Hundred. In a round of interviews towards the end of the summer, to herald the start of his chairmanship, Thompson did not discount bringing private money into the game. He said: "If inflation continues as it is and you have an asset there that you can realise, knowing that we've fixed 85 per cent of our income, then you can't ignore that."

He did urge caution, however, saying that the tournament needed time to find its feet, so creating potential value. What competition from across the pond, and elsewhere, is likely to do above all is accelerate that process. In the franchise world, where loyalty and tradition are absent, only one thing matters to players — the size of the cheque. Because of that, cricket's time in America may have come at last.

Dupont claims Six Nations award for the third time

Rugby union The France scrum half, Antoine Dupont, has been named the Guinness Six Nations Player of the Championship for the third time.

Dupont, the captain, polled 26 per cent of the vote, adding the award to his wins in 2020 and 2022. The other players on the shortlist were his France team-mates Thomas Ramos and Damian Penaud, and Ireland's Caelan Doris, Hugo Keenan and Mack Hansen. Andy Farrell's grand-slam winning Irish supplied ten players in the team of the tournament.

Six Nations team of the tournament H Keenan (Ire); D Penaud (Fra), H Jones (Scot), S Tuipulotu (Scot), J Lowe (Ire); J Sexton (Ire), A Dupont (Fra); A Porter (Ire), D Sheehan (Ire), F Bealham (Ire), T Flament (Fra), J Ryan (Ire), P O'Mahony (Ire), J Van der Flier (Ire), C Doris (Ire).

Durham sign Australian Test spinner Kuhnemann

Cricket Durham have signed the Australia spinner Matthew Kuhnemann for the 2023 season.

The 26-year-old made his Test debut against India last month, taking nine wickets in the three-match series including a best of five for 16 in the second Test at Indore. He has taken 44 wickets in 16 first-class matches.

American football a step closer to Olympic inclusion

Olympic Games American football has won the approval of the IOC's powerful executive board as it bids to become an Olympic sport.

Flag football, a non-contact format of American football played by teams of five, is trying to get on to the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics programme as one of the sports added by the local organisers. The International Federation of American Football (IFAF) must now wait for the approval of the decision by the IOC at its meeting being held in October in Mumbai, India.

The IFAF president, Pierre Trochet, said in a statement that he was "optimistic" regarding the outcome of the vote as the sport "continues its rapid growth around the world".

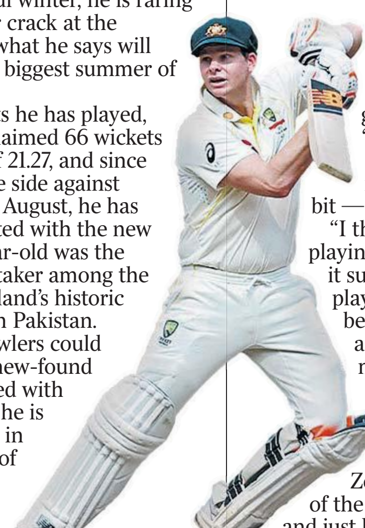
We're hungry to stick one on the Aussies, says Robinson

England seam bowler tells **Elizabeth Ammon** that he is ready to 'beat up' Australia after struggling down under

One of the enduring images of England's dismal performance down under in 2021-22 came with the final act of the final Test in Hobart, when Ollie Robinson was cleaned up by Pat Cummins, having backed away meekly towards square leg. Two days earlier, Jon Lewis, the England bowling coach at the time, had questioned whether Robinson was fit enough to get through a Test match.

A little more than a year on, it feels as if Robinson has answered those questions. Brimming with confidence after a successful winter, he is raring to have another crack at the Australians, in what he says will probably be the biggest summer of his career.

In the 16 Tests he has played, Robinson has claimed 66 wickets at an average of 21.27, and since his return to the side against South Africa in August, he has often been trusted with the new ball. The 29-year-old was the leading wicket-taker among the seamers in England's historic 3-0 series win in Pakistan. While other bowlers could be rotated, his new-found fitness, combined with his skill, means he is likely to feature in most, if not all, of the five-match Ashes series.



Speaking to local radio last week Robinson said that the Australians were in for a "good hiding" this summer. While other players may have regretted using such bullish language for fear of hubris, Robinson was glad that his comments were picked up widely, and he has doubled down on them, saying that England can "stick one on" Australia this summer.

"I was only talking to local radio but I was happy that they [the comments] got out," he says. "I mean, it's been happening in every Ashes series for years — Glenn McGrath says the Aussies will win 5-0 every Ashes, we say 5-0 every Ashes. It's one of the biggest series we play so why not talk it up? Get it going, get it big and give the fans what they want."

Far from being concerned that his bold Ashes predictions and his onfield sledging will fire up Australia, Robinson believes adopting such an attitude will help him and his team-mates in the heat of the battle.

"I think for myself it gets me going a bit on the field and hopefully it brings some of our boys with me as well, to get them going," he says. "We've got a few quiet characters so sometimes it helps gee them up a bit — it works for us.

"I think the cricket we are playing at the moment makes it such an exciting time to play them [Australia]. We've been dominating teams in all conditions for 12 months now — in England we dominated, in Pakistan we dominated and in New Zealand we played most of the cricket for nine days and just lost [the second Test] on the last day. But I think the way we are playing at the moment, we can really stick one on them and win the series comfortably."

ANDREW CORNAGA/PHOTOSPORT/AP



Robinson has doubled down on his bullish language before this summer's Ashes, when he will face Australia's Smith, inset, who will join him at Sussex next month

Having been called out publicly for his lack of fitness during the previous Ashes series, when he struggled to get through an entire Test and had to keep coming off the field, Robinson has come back fitter, leaner and more skilful. He has become one of the first names on the team sheet and a leader among the bowling attack — a natural successor to James Anderson and Stuart Broad when the time comes. He says he has the "hunger" to "put right" what went wrong the last time he faced the old enemy.

"I felt when I got back from that trip to Australia, I didn't leave it all out there and I'd let myself and the side down a bit, so it's definitely something I want to put right, and there's a few fellas in that position as well," he says. "So there's a lot of hungry boys this summer to beat up the Aussies."

Robinson will get an early look at one of Australia's key players when Steve Smith joins Sussex in May for three County Championship matches.

"For county cricket it's great to have Steve Smith at Sussex," Robinson says. "I think for myself, it's not going to change a huge amount. I'm still going to prepare the same way and have a bit of a look at him in the nets.

England's best

Lowest Test bowling averages since Ollie Robinson made his debut in June 2021

Bowler	Average
Ravichandran Ashwin (India; 65 wickets)	19.15
Kagiso Rabada (SA; 78)	19.70
Pat Cummins (Aus; 53)	21.22
Ollie Robinson (Eng; 66)	21.27
James Anderson (Eng; 71)	21.91
Nathan Lyon (Aus; 83)	26.97
Mitchell Starc (Aus; 51)	27.27
Stuart Broad (Eng; 59)	28.01

*Minimum 50 wickets Source: Statsguru

"I might not bowl at him [in the nets], we'll see. But we had Cheteshwar Pujara here last summer and we played India and I bowled at him a lot. Steve is a good player and he's going to get runs whether I bowl at him in the nets or not."

Robinson is expected to play in three of the first six rounds of championship matches, starting at Hove against Durham next week. Pujara has been named as their red-ball captain after Tom Haines stood down, and Robinson will be a key part of their early-season campaign.

Smith, 33, will be at Sussex before joining the Australia camp for the World Test Championship final against India at the Kia Oval from June 7. Some have questioned the wisdom of allowing Smith to get acclimatised to English conditions before the Ashes but Paul Farbrace, Sussex's head coach, has defended their decision to sign the star.

"Steven has been playing in England since he was 17. He came to play Lancashire league cricket at 17 and then moved to Sevenoaks Vine in the Kent League," Farbrace, the former England assistant coach, said. "He played second-team cricket at Kent. His mum is from Maidstone, he has a British passport.

"I think we are doing English cricket a massive favour. Last year there were a lot of county clubs, Sussex being one of them, who were not happy with Andrew Strauss's reforms for county cricket. We want to keep county cricket strong. In Tom Haines, we've got a player who could very well be playing for England in the next 12 to 18 months. If he spends a month with Steve Smith, batting and learning about international cricket from him, then Smith is doing English cricket a huge favour."

Joshua takes swipe at 'clown' critics and ex-coach

Boxing
Tom Kershaw

Before he gets a chance to exorcise his frustrations against Jermaine Franklin on Saturday, Anthony Joshua has taken a swipe at his former trainer Robert Garcia, and branded the boxers-turned-pundits who repeatedly criticise him as "clowns".

Garcia was in the corner for Joshua's rematch against Oleksandr Usyk in August but was critical of the British boxer's performance in the aftermath, insinuating that Joshua was mentally weak and difficult to work with.

Garcia later claimed to have been misquoted but not before Joshua, who is now training under Derrick James, had seen the comments and made little attempt to disguise his irritation. "When it comes to your head coach I think it is important to keep things in-house," Joshua, 33, said. "There are things I didn't like about some of my old coaches that I could talk about but I don't. No one is perfect but, when you come together in arms to go to war, there should be a level of respect.

"Garcia is the first one to say the things he said and I didn't like that, I found it weird. I am not perfect, trust me, I do have tough days in camp, but he went and pointed those out, out of all the things we did in training."

Joshua, who makes his comeback against Franklin on Saturday night, also took exception to some of the commentary from retired fighters about his supposed demise. Carl Froch was one such example, and Joshua has previously messaged the former super-middleweight champion directly to address his repeated public criticisms.

"I was talking to my cousin about it and I just think these people don't get me, they're not on my wavelength," Joshua said. "I don't use boxing as a platform to rant and rave and disrespect my opponents.

"These people that talk about me are looking for me to say something back but I don't have much to say because these people are not on my level. What do I want to entertain a clown for?

"If I have something to say about you, you will see me face-to-face. I will not go online and do it from behind a camera. And when these people see you, at a press conference or whatever, they go, 'AJ, how are you mate?' How does that work? When it was Froch, I messaged him and said, 'What you talking shit about me for?'"

Joshua is under no illusion that he needs a conclusive result, to propel another merry-go-round of negotiations with Tyson Fury for a bout this year. After a cordial press conference, in which a noticeably trimmer Franklin obeyed boxing's usual rituals of promising a knockout, Joshua's parting shot exhibited the nastier streak beneath his typically relaxed demeanour.

"The more he talks, the bigger grave he digs for himself," Joshua said. "I could say a lot of things about him but I respect my opponent. It is not for me to talk, it is for you to do all the talking and for me to do my job on Saturday.

"I am prepared for a 12-rounder but I do believe in my ability, my counter-punching and all that type of stuff to definitely put a dent in Jermaine. I think we will see blood and I just really look forward to getting in there again."

Joshua v Franklin, Saturday, ring walk at 10.40pm. **TV** DAZN. **Radio** talkSPORT

CONTINUED FROM BACK

Muir and Reekie fly home

title in 2012, was told he would never be allowed to coach again after a panel found him guilty of 11 offences, including bullying and inappropriate touching.

This month, the high-jump coach Fuzz Caan, whose athletes included the 2012 Olympic silver-medal winner Robbie Grabarz, received a three-year ban for verbally abusing athletes, calling a team doctor a "f***wit" and doing impressions of disabled people.



Young has coached Muir since 2011

Americans set to take over London Irish 'within days'

Chris Jones, Will Kelleher

The takeover of London Irish by American investors could be concluded "in a matter of days".

The club are fourth in the Gallagher Premiership and in a strong position to reach the play-offs for the first time since 2009. However, Mick Crossan, the owner, has had to stump up hundreds of thousands of pounds each month from his own pocket this season to make sure all the bills are paid.

Crossan has been looking to sell the club and The Times understands that he has a US consortium lined up for the purchase.

Premiership Rugby is keen to push through the takeover and, according to a source, is doing "everything possible" to make it happen.

The negotiations are said to have reached a "delicate" stage, with reports that the American investors are showing their commitment by covering the March payroll.

Players and staff at London Irish were worried that they would not be paid on time for this month, but the club sent their employees an email yesterday morning confirming that payments are now being processed. A source said the situation at Irish is "very different" to the ones at Wasps and Worcester, who both went into administration last autumn. Irish have not yet missed any monthly payments to players and Crossan has apparently found genuine investors to take the club on. However, there are no guarantees over the club's immediate future and the priority is to find enough funds to finish the season.

In a statement released yesterday, London Irish said: "It has been public knowledge that the club are exploring their options with regards to investment, however no comment will be made until there is anything to announce. In regards to recent media reports, London Irish can categorically confirm that all staff will be paid this month."

Crossan is determined to find a buyer with his beloved club's best interests at heart before he departs in the summer.

He told The Mail on Sunday last year that he would even give away the club for nothing. "If anyone's looking to buy a rugby club with its own training ground and perpetual [P] shares then they don't even have to buy it," he said.

"I'll give it to them as long as they fund it."

Rumours began circulating around the club at Christmas that they were in financial trouble. Despite their move back to London in 2021 from Reading, to take up tenancy at the Brentford Community Stadium, Irish produce a small turnover (about £10 million at best in a good year) and have large debts. According to a report published by the House of Commons website, using Companies House data, Irish owe £37.3 million.

At that time, Crossan and Adrian Alli, the interim chief executive who was appointed in October, addressed the squad to allay their fears. On the strength of that message, many players signed new contracts, turning down offers elsewhere, although recently others have decided to leave because of the uncertainty. "If it goes wrong now the players will be left high and dry and utterly furious," a source said.

Irish have always produced good young players, but some will depart in the summer. Ollie Hassell-Collins, the England wing, will join Leicester Tigers while Tom Parton, the full back, is joining Saracens.

The fraught situation at Irish sits in stark contrast to their form on the field. The club were bottom of the Premiership at Christmas but have risen to fourth after recent victories over Northampton Saints, Newcastle Falcons and Sale Sharks.

"It's not filtered down to the players yet," a source said. "As it does it will have an impact, which is a real shame as it's starting to come together."

Premiership Rugby declined to comment on the issue.

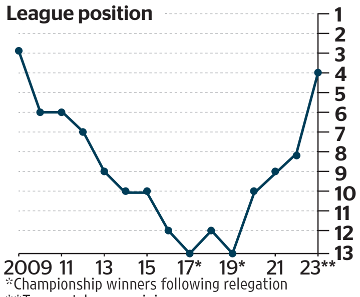
DANNY LOO/PPAUK/SHUTTERSTOCK



Ben Loader runs in a try against Northampton but London Irish's strong form on the pitch belies the financial troubles off it

Fall and rise

London Irish's league position since most recent Premiership play-off appearance in 2009



*Championship winners following relegation
**Two matches remaining

Who owns the clubs?

Bath Bruce Craig, English businessman
Bristol Bears Stephen Lansdown, English billionaire
Exeter Chiefs Shareholders, though chairman Tony Rowe is influential
Harlequins Duncan Saville and Charles Jillings
Gloucester Martin St Quinton
Leicester Tigers Shareholders
London Irish Mick Crossan, businessman
Newcastle Falcons Semore Kurdi, property investor born in Jordan
Northampton Saints Businessman Keith Barwell has majority share
Sale Sharks Simon Orange, English businessman
Saracens Kimono House Limited consortium owns a controlling stake

Farrell to face Ospreys after injury scare

Chris Jones

Saracens' efforts to win a fourth Heineken Champions Cup have received a boost with Owen Farrell set to face Ospreys in Sunday's round-of-16 match at the StoneX Stadium despite his injury scare last weekend.

It had appeared that the England captain could be sidelined at a crucial period of the season for his club after limping out of the 36-24 win against Harlequins on Saturday that guaranteed them a home Gallagher Premiership play-off semi-final.

However, Mark McCall, the Saracens director of rugby, has delivered a positive update on Farrell's ankle injury and believes that his captain will be fit to take on Ospreys. "Owen took part in some of the training today and we are relatively optimistic he will be available for the weekend," McCall said.

"He did not need a scan and was much better on Monday and Tuesday. He trained today and as long as there is no reaction to that, I am sure he will be OK. He is our captain and played brilliantly at the weekend, led the team really well and so fingers crossed.

"Ospreys have lots of internationals who are used to big occasions, big matches like this, and they are going to be a really tough proposition for us. Our experiences of knockout matches in Europe are that they are a big step up.

"Ospreys are superb at the breakdown and try to disrupt you there. When you reach the knockout stages it becomes really exciting."

Andy Christie, the Scotland and Saracens flanker, said he was not surprised to discover that Farrell, 31, would be available. "That's Faz. He is a very tough person and a brilliant competitor and gets himself back up. That is why he is so big for us," Christie said.

Meanwhile McCall said he would welcome a return to a Champions Cup format of six pools of four teams rather than the present two groups of 12 feeding into a round of 16. An overhaul of the competition is under consideration after complaints that it is too difficult for fans to follow at present.

"I think the old format was magnificent, to be honest," he said. "You had to work incredibly hard to get out of your group. It is not quite the achievement to get into the last 16 as it was to reach the quarter-finals all those years ago. I would prefer the old format."

McCall also dismissed reports that his scrum coach, Ian Peel, could be joining the England set-up.

"We are very lucky to have Ian at our club," McCall said. "Fingers crossed he will be here for a long time."



Farrell suffered an ankle problem

Results

Football

Sky Bet League One

Cheltenham (0) **2** **Sheffield Wed** (0) **2**
Keena 62, May 69 — Flint 76, Gregory 87
5,433

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Plymouth	38	24	8	6	67	41	26	80
Sheffield Wed	38	23	10	5	66	30	36	79
Ipswich	37	21	12	4	72	31	41	75
Barnsley	37	22	6	9	61	34	27	72
Bolton	38	18	10	10	52	31	21	64
Derby	38	18	10	10	59	39	20	64
Peterborough	38	20	3	15	65	47	18	63
Wycombe	38	18	7	13	51	36	15	61
Portsmouth	38	15	13	10	53	44	9	58
Shrewsbury	37	16	7	14	47	41	6	55
Exeter	38	14	10	14	56	49	7	52
Charlton	38	12	13	13	53	50	3	49
Fleetwood	38	12	13	13	41	39	2	49
Lincoln City	37	9	18	10	34	40	-6	45
Bristol Rovers	37	12	9	16	50	60	-10	45
Port Vale	38	12	9	17	40	55	-15	45
Cheltenham	38	12	8	18	34	49	-15	44
Burton	36	11	8	17	47	70	-23	41
MK Dons	38	11	6	21	34	54	-20	39
Oxford Utd	37	9	10	18	39	49	-10	37
Accrington	38	8	11	19	30	63	-33	35
Morecambe	39	7	13	19	37	63	-26	34
Cambridge Utd	37	8	6	23	28	59	-31	30
Forest Green	38	6	8	24	29	71	-42	26

Cinch Scottish League Two Dumbarton 0 Forfar 1.

Women's Champions League: Quarter-finals, second leg Arsenal 2 Bayern Munich 0 (Arsenal win 2-1 on agg); Barcelona 5 Roma 1 (Barcelona win 6-1 on agg).

Cricket

Second T20 international

Chattogram Bangladesh 202-3 (17 overs: Litton Das 83); Ireland 125-9 (17 overs: C Campher 50; Shakib Al Hasan 5 for 22). ***Bangladesh won by 77 runs***.

● Bangladesh lead three-match series 2-0

Snooker

Duelbits Tour Championship

Bonus Arena, Hull: Quarter-final S Murphy (Eng) bt R Milkins (Eng) 10-8.

Tennis

Miami Open

Men: Singles: Fourth round C Eubanks (US) bt A Mannarino (Fr) 7-6 (7-2), 7-6 (7-5); F Cerundolo (Arg) bt L Sonego (It) 3-6 6-3, 6-2; D Medvedev (Russ) bt Q Halys (Fr) 6-4, 6-2. **Doubles: Quarter-final** E Roger-Vasselin (Fr) and S González (Mex) bt W Koolhof (Neth) and N Skupski (GB) 4-6, 7-6 (7-5), 10-5. **Women: Singles: Quarter-finals** J Pegula (US) bt A Potapova (Russ) 4-6, 6-3, 7-6 (7-2); S Cirstea (Rom) bt A Sabalenka (Bela) 6-4, 6-4.

Fixtures

Football

Women's Champions League: Quarter-finals, second leg Chelsea (1) v Lyon (0) (8.0); Wolfsburg (1) v PSG (0) (5.45).

Rugby league

Betfred Super League Leigh Leopards v Wigan Warriors (8.0).

Snooker

Bonus Arena, Hull Duelbits Tour Championship.

Spurs 'urgently' seeking clarity as Fifa extends Paratici's ban

Tom Allnutt

Tottenham Hotspur were thrown into further chaos yesterday as the club were trying to find out if their managing director of football, Fabio Paratici, is still allowed to work for them after his ban from Italian football was extended to apply worldwide by Fifa.

Less than a week after Antonio Conte left Spurs by mutual agreement on Sunday, Paratici's future has also been thrown into serious doubt, with the problems piling up for chairman Daniel Levy at a crucial juncture in the season.

Paratici was due to play a key role in identifying Conte's permanent successor and would have been heavily involved in planning for the summer transfer window, not to mention talks with Harry Kane over a possible new contract.

The 50-year-old was handed a 30-month suspension by the Italian FA (FIGC) in January for his part in the financial irregularities scandal at Juventus and that punishment will now apply globally, Fifa has said, with Spurs caught completely off-guard by the announcement.

Juventus deny any wrongdoing and both the club and the executives have appealed to the Italian Olympic Committee, with a decision due on April 19. Tottenham believed Paratici was allowed to continue working until that appeal was heard but are waiting to hear whether Fifa's extension changes the situation.

"We are urgently seeking further clarification from Fifa as to the details of the extension and its variance from the FIGC sanction," the club said in a statement.

Paratici will also have ten days to request the grounds for Fifa's extension of the ban, after which he can submit an appeal to the world governing body. A preliminary hearing in Turin around possible criminal charges has been postponed until May 10.



Paratici runs football operations at Spurs

Tottenham reacted angrily to Fifa's announcement, which the club claimed was "taken with no advance notice to any of the parties involved". Spurs said they found out after reading "media reports" yesterday morning and only received written notification from Fifa at about 5pm.

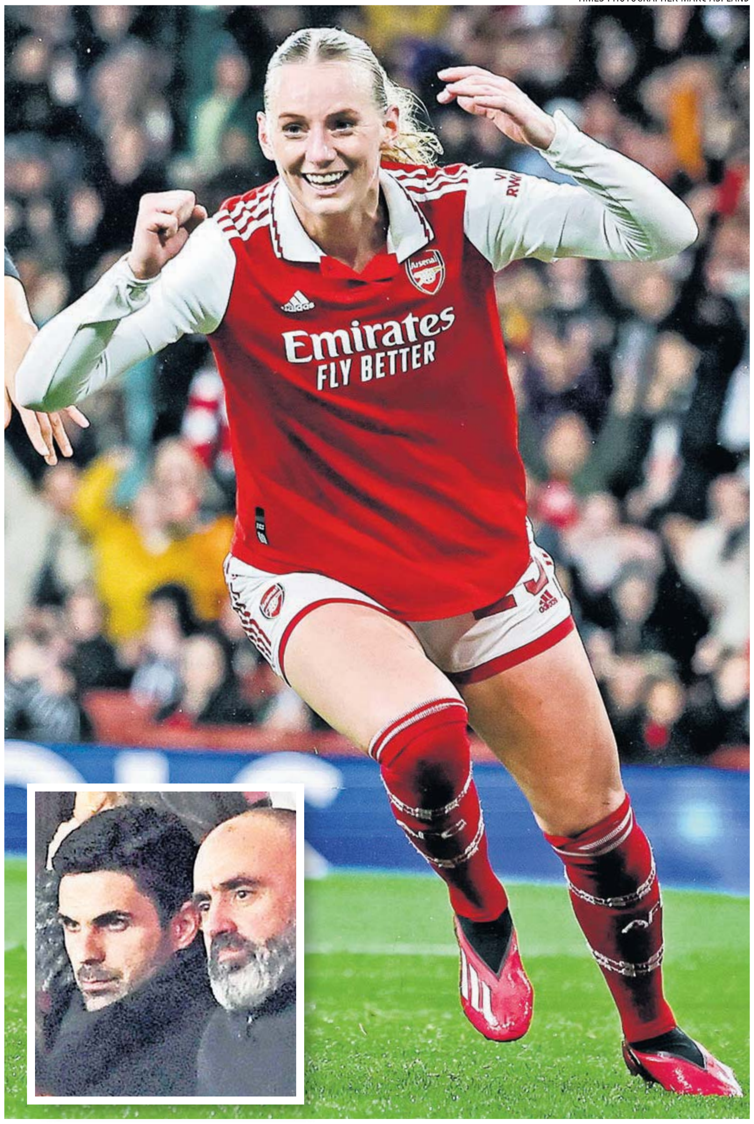
Paratici worked in various senior roles at Juventus between 2010 and 2021 and is one of 11 former executives targeted by the investigation. The FIGC asked in January for their suspension to be applied worldwide, which Fifa approved, saying in a statement yesterday: "The Chairperson of the Fifa Disciplinary Committee has decided to extend the sanctions imposed by FIGC on several football officials to have worldwide effect."

Paratici joined Tottenham in 2021 and his removal would be embarrassing for Levy, who placed great faith in the Italian to take charge of all football operations.

Another departure would also heighten the sense of chaos at Tottenham, who were already rocking after the exit of Conte; he left after criticising the mentality of the players. Conte's assistant, Cristian Stellini, has been put in charge until the end of the season as the team attempt to hang on to their place in the Premier League's top four. There is also uncertainty around the future of Kane, whose contract expires next year; the striker is yet to sign a new deal.

The Tottenham Hotspur Supporters' Trust said yesterday: "This news adds further to the extremely concerning situation at the club. No manager, no director of football and uncertainty around our star player and our end-of-season finish. Fans deserve to hear a clear statement of strategy."

TIMES PHOTOGRAPHER MARC ASPLAND



Blackstenius celebrates scoring Arsenal's decisive goal in front of Arteta, inset

Resolute Arsenal into last four

Arsenal *Maanum 19, Blackstenius 26*	2
Bayern Munich	0

Arsenal win 2-1 on aggregate
Women's Champions League
Molly Hudson

Frida Maanum's goal to set Arsenal on their way to the Champions League semi-finals for the first time in a decade was of such quality that the record crowd inside the Emirates were celebrating before it reached the net.

Arsenal had suffered an early blow last night in the second leg of the quarter-final against Bayern Munich when captain Kim Little limped off with a hamstring injury, prompting a hurried reshuffle, but instead of frustrating the home side it gave them the motivation to overturn a 1-0 deficit from last week's first leg. Leah Williamson, who had taken the armband, and Little's midfield position, produced a deft flick to Maanum, who unleashed a fierce shot into the top corner from 20 yards out.

"If we hit it right, we can beat any team," Jonas Eidevall, the Arsenal manager, said.

The 21,307 fans watching set a new record for an English team in this competition. Eidevall believes it shows his side can play at the Emirates permanently in the future. "Five years ago, if someone would have said Arsenal's long-term plan is to move permanently to the Emirates, people would probably have asked, 'How is that going to happen?' But now that might be a realistic vision for the future," he said.

Seven minutes after the opener, as Mikel Arteta, the Arsenal men's manager, watched on, Katie McCabe crossed for Stina Blackstenius to nod home their second goal and seal a semi-final against either Wolfsburg or Paris Saint-Germain.

Betting crackdown could cost club £10m a season

CONTINUED FROM BACK

is thought that enough clubs will back the plan if a three-year transition period is included, something that is likely to be accepted by the government. It is understood that ministers are not looking for clubs in the EFL to take similar action because of the financial hardship it would cause.

Eight of the 20 Premier League clubs have gambling shirt sponsors but some deals, including Newcastle United's and Fulham's, are set to end after this season. None of the "big six" clubs have front-of-shirt deals with betting firms.

Club sources said that betting companies usually represented the most lucrative sponsorship partners and were the quickest to agree for newly promoted clubs. One club suggested that dropping them would mean a likely income cut of £5 million to £10 million a season.

There has been concern at the growing number of gambling firms with opaque ownership based in the Far East. These are usually licensed to operate and advertise in the UK via an arrangement with an Isle of Man-registered company, TGP Europe.

Under the present rules, it is TGP Europe, rather than the Gambling Commission, that has the responsibility for conducting due diligence into the firms.

The Premier League had been expected to agree to the ban last year but it delayed a decision after Liz Truss was elected prime minister in case she changed the proposed legislation. The white paper is now expected as soon as next month and is being overseen by the sports minister, Stuart Andrew MP.



Fulham have a gambling shirt sponsor

Tony Bloom, the chairman of Brighton & Hove Albion, who made his fortune from sports betting, has backed a ban on shirt sponsorship by gambling firms, saying last year: "From a personal point of view, it's really important to be aware of children seeing gambling or betting advertising on the shirt in particular, because they buy shirts.

"I don't think having gambling sponsorship on shirts is good, but I understand that for some clubs, particularly clubs down the leagues with much less revenue, the gambling companies pay the best so it's a difficult decision.

"Although there is gambling advertising all around, I just think on the shirts it's the most obvious."

Mitrovic apologises for grabbing referee

Aleksandar Mitrovic has apologised for grabbing the referee Chris Kavanagh during Fulham's FA Cup quarter-final defeat away to Manchester United.

Mitrovic was shown a straight red card for handling Kavanagh after the official awarded a penalty and dismissed Willian for a deliberate handball in the 3-1 loss.

The Serbia striker, who is waiting to learn his punishment after being charged by the FA with violent and improper conduct, said his reactions were "wrong" and that he had apologised to Kavanagh.

Indonesia loses World Cup over Israel snub

Fifa has stripped Indonesia of the right to stage this year's Under-20 World Cup, over what an Indonesian official said was a failure to honour its commitments to the tournament.

The decision was taken after the country's football federation, PSSI, said it had cancelled the draw because the governor of the largely Hindu island of Bali refused to host Israel's team.

Fifa said a new host for the tournament, which runs from May 20 to June 11, will be announced "as soon as possible", adding that the PSSI may yet face further sanctions.

Villa and Arsenal staff charged over fracas

Members of Aston Villa's and Arsenal's backroom teams have been charged with improper conduct for their behaviour in stoppage time during Arsenal's 4-2 win at Villa Park last month.

Villa's head of performance analysis, Victor Manas, has been accused of "improper and/or violent behaviour," while the Arsenal technical analyst coach Miguel Molina has been charged over "behaviour and/or language that was improper and/or violent".

Both men were also charged for their behaviour in the tunnel after the game. They have until Friday to respond.

Old Firm 'headbutt' could bring sanction

The Rangers women's assistant manager Craig McPherson has been charged by the Scottish FA after he appeared to headbutt the Celtic manager Fran Alonso at the end of Monday's Old Firm derby.

TV footage showed McPherson appearing to aim a headbutt at the back of Alonso's head after the Scottish Women's Premier League game at Broadwood ended 1-1.

The SFA said that McPherson had "allegedly breached" Disciplinary Rule 77 relating to "violent conduct, serious foul play, threatening, abusive, indecent or insulting words or behaviour".

FA to remove blackout at semi-final for safety

The FA is set to lift its usual Saturday television blackout between 2.45pm and 5.15pm and allow the FA Cup semi-final between Manchester City and Sheffield United to kick off at 4.45pm because of police advice.

The FA was thought to have favoured a 5.30pm start for the match, as has often been the case for Saturday semi-finals, but has been told by police that the game should kick-off no later than 4.45pm for safety reasons.

Rodri's 'rubbish' jibe is out of date

The Spaniard's bitter verdict came too late. Hampden Park is again becoming a lion's den, **Michael Grant** writes

IAN MACNICOL/GETTY IMAGES



McTominay, above, scored in each half to earn Scotland a famous win over Spain. Robertson, who clashed with Pedro Porro, below left, led his team to the shock victory which left Rodri, inset above, sounding like a sore loser



The ironic thing about the Spain and Manchester City midfielder Rodri sourly dismissing Scotland's style of play as "rubbish" was that his verdict came four years too late. Had he offered his withering assessment in the spring of 2019 plenty would have backed him up, not least Scotland supporters traumatised by the all-time low of a 3-0 capitulation against Kazakhstan. Not any more. Instead of sombrely agreeing with Rodri, now the Tartan Army could gleefully savour the bitterness of a bad loser.

One of the *Flower of Scotland* lines being roared out around Hampden Park as Rodri and his Spain side were brought down, about how "we can still rise now", is coming true. From the ashes of that nadir in Nursultan under the previous manager, Alex McLeish, Scotland are a growing force under Steve Clarke: only three defeats in the past 16 competitive games, 12 wins and unbeaten in the past six. Denmark, who were pot one seeds for the Euro 2024 qualifying draw, were beaten at Hampden in the last World Cup qualifiers and now Spain, who are in decline but still ranked tenth in the world, have failed to handle Glasgow too.

Whisper it, but Rodri's view was not entirely unfounded. He didn't say Scotland were rubbish, but that what they did was rubbish. He bridled about time-wasting and provocation, and there was some of that from Clarke's men. Scotland aren't in the business of rolling out a welcome mat and this team are not prepared to be soft touches for anyone. Rush to take quick restarts and keep the play flowing, suiting Spain, or take opportunities to disrupt and stand up to them? A no-brainer.

Clarke is a canny and streetwise manager, for so long José Mourinho's lieutenant at Chelsea, and is perfectly aware of the dark arts. It was clear there was an instruction to rattle and confront the Spanish players and Luis de la Fuente's side didn't like that attitude one little bit, although four Scottish bookings (Spain had two and committed 15 fouls to Scotland's 13) hardly suggested a night of anarchy. More significant was Scotland channelling all the energy and passion washing down at them from the Hampden stands, with the players and fans feeding off each other.

This has been building under Clarke. There was a palpable sense of anticipation in the build-up to the Spain game and a tentative belief that strong home form and a relatively vulnerable visiting team might lead to something remarkable.

Clarke isn't in the whipping-up business — he regards media duties as a tiresome chore rather than a platform — but even he had talked about the potential for a famous victory that would be mentioned for years. It was a message he underlined in his main team talk.

He was quietly confident because he knows his resources. He is a sound man-manager with a talented group of players who are passionate and motivated. The backbone of his team has been together for years. Andy Robertson has 62 caps, John McGinn 54, Callum McGregor 51, Grant Hanley 48, Scott McTominay 39 and Kieran Tierney 37. For a generation in the wilderness it has pained Scotland to witness the achievements of nations with comparable or smaller populations such as Croatia and Wales. There has been no equivalent of Luka Modric or Gareth Bale for Scottish managers.

Anyone entering Hampden via its grand South Stand steps must walk in the shadow of a giant banner of Robertson, Scotland's captain, the squad's most-capped outfield player and its most highly decorated. Robertson's driving influence brought assists for two of McTominay's four goals against Cyprus and Spain. But he is a left back and not the lone superstar for his country that Modric and Bale have been for theirs. A genius goalscorer would be lovely but a powerful collective has its advantages too. There is no single Scottish player whose absence would feel ruinous.

Ten of the starters against Spain play their club football in England, six of them in the Premier League. If Scotland deliver on Clarke's ambition to be serial qualifiers for major tournaments it would have cascading benefits for a Scottish game that still has unresolved structural and developmental problems. The dominant domestic club, Celtic, have not fielded a single Scottish player aged 21 or under in the league this season. Rangers have picked only three. The Scotland Under-21 side have won only two of their past 15 games yet after 6½ years in charge Scot Gemmill continues as head coach with no questions asked.

Clarke picked only four Scotland-based players in his original 23-man squad for Cyprus and Spain and even looked away from Scottish nationality entirely to convince Lyndon Dykes, Ché Adams and now Angus Gunn to commit under the bloodline eligibility rule. The great hope — that Scotland will produce a genuinely top-class player who is an attacker and goalscorer, not another left back — may rest with the 17-year-old Ben Doak, whom Liverpool signed from Celtic a year ago.

Still, the here and now is compelling. Confidence continues to grow and the Spain game was the sixth Hampden sell-out under Clarke, with three more to come before the year is out. Khvicha Kvaratskhelia is an obvious attraction when Georgia come to Glasgow in June and so is Erling Haaland when Norway visit for the final qualifier in November. England being in town for a September friendly takes care of itself.

But Scotland are selling out regardless of whom they face. Clarke's first game was against Cyprus in front of just over 31,000 four years ago and the same nation was beaten in front of nearly 50,000 on Saturday. Hampden has slowly rebuilt its former reputation as a lion's den for visiting teams.

Beating Spain was an inspirational, once-in-a-generation result and the Scottish FA's marketing wing was quick to capitalise. At 11am on Wednesday tens of thousands of fans on its database received an email flogging a new limited-edition boxed 150th anniversary Scotland top. The original went on sale last week and, despite the £90 price tag, the stock quickly ran out. More are being produced. A buoyant Scotland support just can't get enough.

'Spineless' Spain still waiting to be revived by next generation

Tom Allnutt

There was a time during the glory days of Spanish football, when *tiki-taka* was in full flow and Andrés Iniesta was still gliding past opponents like an Olympic ice-skater destined for gold, that the coach of the national team seemed an almost peripheral figure.

Which is not to denigrate the role of Luis Aragonés, who presided over Spain winning Euro 2008, or Vicente del Bosque, who led them to victory at the World Cup in 2010 and then again at the Euros two years later. But such was the skill of that Barcelona-Real Madrid group, with the likes of Iniesta, Xavi Hernández, Sergio Ramos and Gerard Piqué, and the strength of the culture at their clubs, that it felt as if any system and tactics would work. No striker? No problem. Cesc Fàbregas can always play up front. Fast-forward a decade and it is tempting to wonder if Spain have even one player at that kind of level now, a realisation brought into sharp focus by their 2-0 defeat by Scotland at Hampden Park on Tuesday.

Pedri and Gavi, Barcelona's midfield duo, are mesmeric talents but are aged 20 and 18 respectively. Xavi was 30 when he lifted the World Cup in South Africa. How many others in this Spain team would push for a place in the starting line-ups of France or Argentina? Perhaps Rodri in defensive midfield or Aymeric Laporte in defence.

Spain's strength under Luis Enrique was instead in the collective, in a clearly defined system and a familiar identity, and the breadth, rather than the individual quality, of options. In Luis Enrique, they also had one of the most decorated managers on the international stage, who may have been exhausting for the Spanish federation and a pain for the press but guaranteed that no stone would be left unturned in the pursuit of progress.

Spain underperformed in Qatar, losing on penalties to Morocco in the round of 16, but there was room for optimism, just as there had been the year before when they were the better side against Italy in the semi-finals of Euro 2020. Spain looked a young team with a plan, heading in the right direction and extracting the most out of what they had.

By replacing Luis Enrique with Luis de la Fuente after the World Cup the idea was to steer the team more towards its roots, that the promotion of the manager of the under-21s would make the national side a more likeable team again, one that could operate in a more open and comfortable environment. The first training session was open to the public for the first time since 2019.

The danger, though, is that comfort strays into complacency and that a manager so used to looking to the future is subconsciously less exacting about the present. For Scotland game, De la Fuente made eight changes to his starting line-up. "It was not surprising that, despite good intentions, Spain played a confusing match," wrote Alfred Relano in the Madrid newspaper AS. In El Pais, José Sámano wrote: "This new Spain has not taken off, it hasn't engaged, it doesn't have a spine."

After the game, a philosophical De la Fuente then looked for the positives, when some felt he should have been more ruthless. "This message that we lost but it's OK — no," Guti, the former Real Madrid midfielder, said. "It's cheap to play for Spain now. Very cheap."

After Spain's World Cup-winning core had grown old, the next generation failed to come through. From Isco to Marco Asensio, Thiago Alcântara to Gerard Deulofeu, young talents once tipped for stardom struggled to excel.

The result is that for a while Spain's best players have been either old or young, with little in between. Sergio Busquets and Ramos, the last of the veterans, have both retired, leaving a dearth of leadership and a lack of continuity.

Spain's latest blip need not threaten their chances of qualifying for Euro 2024. The new format makes it almost impossible for the established sides not to get through. But there was an early warning that for this squad, the margins are much finer than before and for this manager, the stakes are higher.

DAZN bids to show all 1,656 EFL matches live

Martyn Ziegler Chief Sports Reporter

The streaming platform DAZN is bidding to show every EFL match live in the UK and across the world in a move that would lead to the Saturday 3pm blackout being ditched.

If successful — and there is strong competition from rivals — it would mean that all 1,656 games in a season across the Championship, League One and League Two would be screened live. Most of them would still be played on Saturdays, so the EFL would need to drop the blackout.

That would mean a huge change in how English football is shown on TV. Unlike most European countries, not every match in the Premier League is made available to be watched by domestic viewers and no games can be screened on Saturday afternoons.

Under the existing deals, the Premier League makes 200 matches available to three domestic broadcasters a season, while the EFL allows 138 games to be shown live on Sky Sports, plus the end-of-season play-offs.

The DAZN proposal will present EFL board members with a dilemma, as they will have to balance the extra TV revenue against the possibility of clubs losing match-day income, particularly from travelling fans, who could be less likely to attend matches if they are available to watch live. DAZN is understood to be competing against Sky Sports, the rights holders since 2002, as well as the Nordic streaming giant Viaplay — which has just started showing Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland's Euro qualifiers — for the next set of broadcast rights from 2024. TNT Sport, the new joint venture between BT Sport and Warner Bros Discovery, is also expected to bid, with the EFL open to a hybrid option, where more than one platform shows matches, including a terrestrial broadcaster. The auction is expected to conclude this summer.

DAZN would be open to sharing some games but wants to position itself as the place to go to see every EFL match for fans both in the UK and abroad, similar to the deal last month when it secured the global rights outside the United States to every NFL match. It believes it can handle the huge logistical demands, including having four cameras and a commentator covering every game.

The EFL rights are traditionally sold in four-year blocks but DAZN would want at least five years and preferably more. The Sky deal is worth £119 million a year but the EFL is aiming to secure more than £200 million annually from the new deal. That is still a fraction of the £1.33 billion the Premier League earns a year from domestic rights.

Andy Holt, the chairman of Accrington Stanley, said he would need to see the details of the DAZN proposal before agreeing to the end of the Saturday 3pm blackout.

"The value of the deal is all-important as of course we don't want to lose out," Holt said. "Generally I prefer to see fans in the grounds but if we are all going to get an extra £3 million or whatever then of course we would look at it."

Holt said there was "definitely an impact" on fans going to games when matches were on TV, particularly away supporters, who often make up 30 per cent of Accrington's attendances.

DAZN's move is an attempt to establish itself as a key player in the British sporting market.

Its main offering until now has been boxing and its deal with Anthony Joshua starts this weekend, with his fight against Jermaine Franklin.

DAZN already holds the domestic rights in Italy for Serie A football, paying €840 million (£745 million) a season, and last month Shay Segev, its chief executive, said the platform was positioning itself to compete with Sky, BT Sport and Amazon Prime for Premier League packages next year.

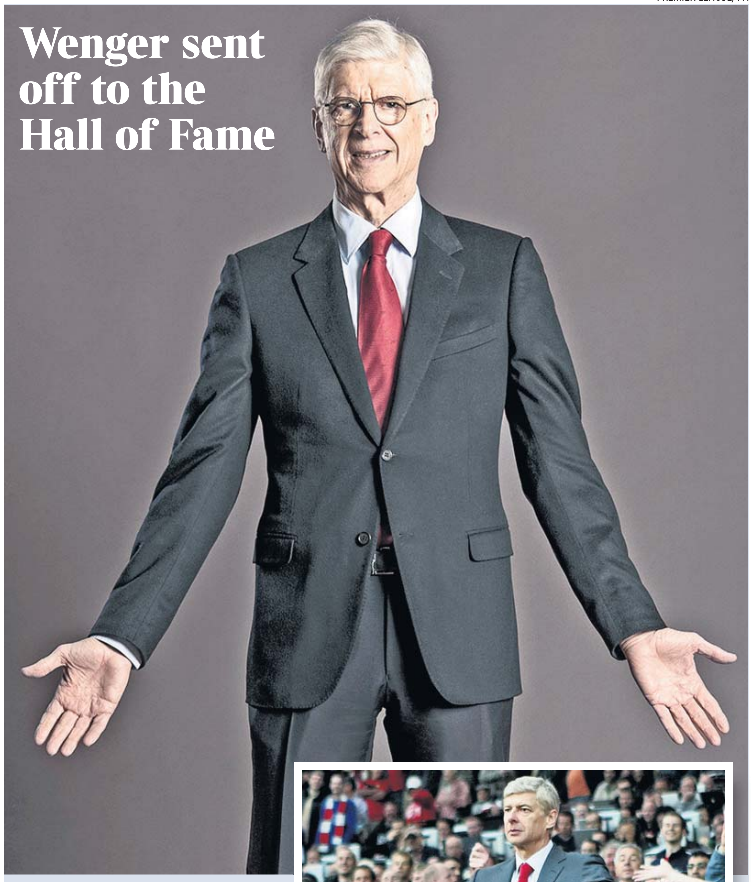
"Football is obviously very big in the UK, and EPL [English Premier League] is an option on our menu," Segev said at the time.

"If the question is, do we have any ambition to go to this market, the answer is, of course, yes.

"And it's not only ambition, it's a high priority on my list."

PREMIER LEAGUE/PA

Wenger sent off to the Hall of Fame

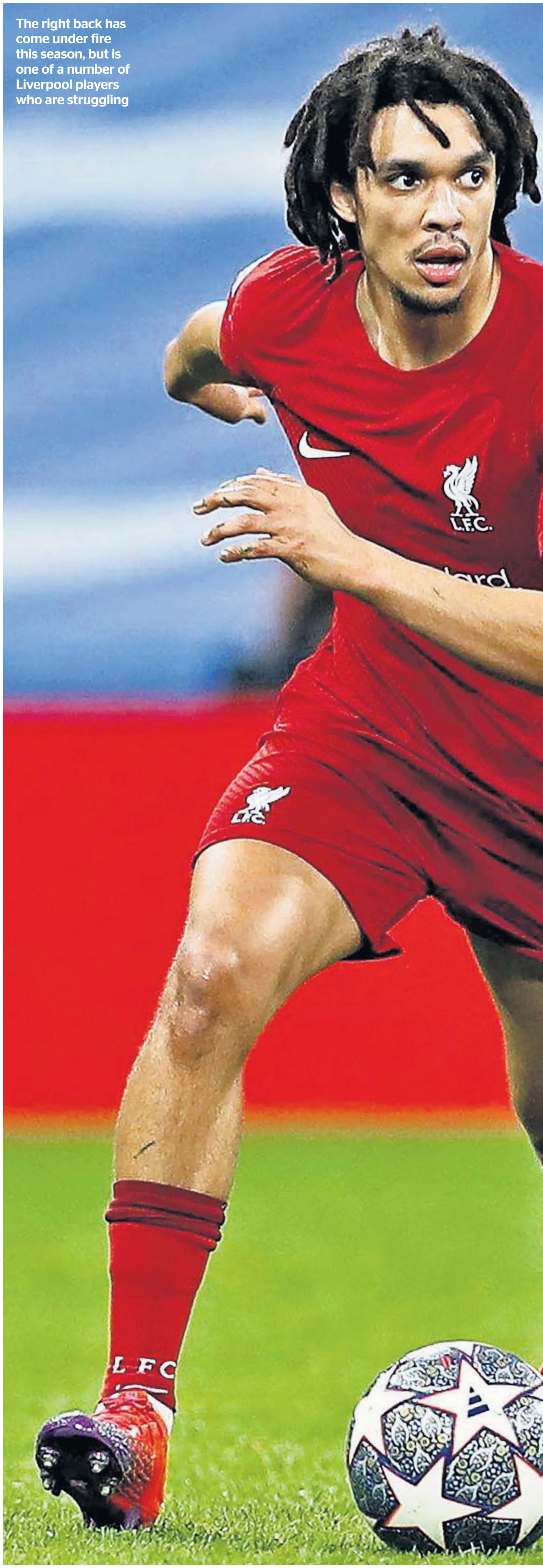




Arsène Wenger recreated the famous gesture he made after being sent off at Old Trafford in 2009, right, as he was inducted into the Premier League Hall of Fame yesterday



Trent plotting to find way back for club and country



The right back has come under fire this season, but is one of a number of Liverpool players who are struggling

Paul Joyce

Northern Football Correspondent



The easiest thing for Trent Alexander-Arnold to do would have been to disappear and forget about everything.

Liverpool's limp Champions League exit against Real Madrid two weeks ago was still raw when a brief telephone call from Gareth Southgate compounded the defender's woes, confirming that he would be excluded from the latest England squad. A difficult season, one which has been problematic for everyone at Anfield, not only its homegrown star, had reached a new low.

Yet it is what happened next which should buoy Liverpool supporters — and not simply that Alexander-Arnold spent the Sunday night after the Real game in the company of Liverpool target Jude Bellingham, at a Chris Brown concert in London.

Instead of taking up the offer of a week off, the 24-year-old reported to Liverpool's training ground and got his head down. The focus was on fitness, strength and conditioning as he trained under the watchful eye of the first-team fitness coach, Dr Conall Murtagh.

It was not the action of someone who does not care or whose enthusiasm has waned after winning everything at club level. Rather, it reflected someone who knows there have been times when he has not been on top of his game and is determined to perform with the verve which once prompted the Liverpool manager, Jürgen Klopp, to laud him as the best right back in the world.

Alexander-Arnold has, more recently, had to grow accustomed to criticism over his defensive aptitude, the first real bump in his career path coinciding with the collective dip that leaves Liverpool struggling to qualify for the Champions League. He knows that he must improve his one-on-one defending by displaying the intensity and positive body language that will enable him to be more consistent. However, the schedule of three games a week often restricts the amount of time he can stay on the training pitch after a normal session.

His confidence has been affected, which is why having a break would have been advocated by some, especially given the punishing mental and physical schedule he has faced since becoming a first-team regular in 2017-18. Both this season and last season, Alexander-Arnold has played the third-highest number of minutes among Liverpool's players. Compare this workload to those players he has fallen behind in the England pecking order: over the past four seasons, Reece James has played the equivalent of 52 fewer club matches, Kyle Walker 41 and Kieran Trippier 49.

Alexander-Arnold at least felt he had a break after the World Cup in Qatar. He had enjoyed the tournament, spending time with club-mate Jordan Henderson, Bellingham and the Arsenal goalkeeper Aaron Ramsdale, who is one of his closest friends in football, the duo having been room-mates in England's junior ranks. The 33 minutes he had against Wales in the group stage kept him feeling involved, even if he wanted to play more often.

Klopp is on record as stating that Liverpool's malaise has affected too many members of his squad, and Virgil van Dijk, Henderson and Fabinho are among those who will feel scrutiny has fallen on them, too, on occasions. But, as a result of the standards set in previous seasons, there has been a forensic dissection of Alexander-Arnold's displays.

The headline numbers which had framed his heady rise are not there this term. There have been two assists so far in the Premier League compared to 12 last season, but that stops short of painting the true picture.

His big-chance creation is actually higher than in any campaign since 2018-19, which highlights how one of the main issues for Klopp has been the profligacy of the forwards who have spurned the opportunities created. Liverpool have ended up having to do more defending and attention has, therefore, been paid to the other aspects of Alexander-Arnold's game. The 1-0 defeat at the Bernabéu in the second leg of the round of 16 showed his good, bad and indifferent sides. The statistic proclaiming he was dribbled past six times is misleading. He was beaten by Vinícius Jr by the touchline in the first half, but the winger then turned back towards his own goal before giving away a foul on Salah. Luka Modric would later lift a ball over Alexander-Arnold's head and cross for Federico Valverde as Liverpool survived a scare in the second half. However, sometimes an opponent would run in-field past the full back and straight into Ibrahima Konaté or another team-mate.

The idea that Alexander-Arnold cannot defend has taken hold but that, too, is wrong. In the 56th minute, with the second leg goalless, he was alert and produced an excellent covering tackle to block Karim Benzema's effort.

However, at times, Alexander-Arnold can switch off, as was seen with Benzema's 78th-minute winning goal.

There was no pressure as the move began with a throw-in on Real's left and the Spanish team started a 17-pass move, with Alexander-Arnold, at one point, finding Toni Kroos, Benzema and Vinicius around him.

That should not happen under Klopp. He does not want the full backs to be left one-on-one, never mind one-on-three, as the assistant manager Pepijn Lijnders explained to The Times last season. Lijnders had been asked whether Alexander-Arnold was expected to do too much for the team, stepping into a creative No 8 role one moment but defending in the next.

"We defend with the whole team — everyone is responsible for defending," Lijnders said. "If a defender only gets judged on one-versus-one situations in big spaces, the football world is just looking back in time instead of into the future." However, despite Liverpool's struggles, there has been no significant move to ease his attacking workload so he can concentrate on defending.

There will be moments over the coming 11 days — Manchester City (away), Chelsea (away), Arsenal (home) — when Liverpool and Alexander-Arnold will have to suffer once again. Coming out the other side better will provide evidence of progress for both.

United step up Rashford contract talks

Paul Hirst

Manchester United will step up efforts to tie Marcus Rashford down to a new long-term contract.

Talks are expected to take place in the next few weeks with Rashford's representatives, who are in a strong negotiating position, with the player enjoying his best season at the club.

The 25-year-old is United's top scorer this term with 27 goals in 44 appearances, but he has only 15 months left on his contract. The club want him to commit to a long-term deal before the end of the season.

It is understood that United are willing to offer Rashford a pay rise to reflect his importance to the club. He signed his present contract in 2019 and earns a reported £250,000 a week. That was due to expire this summer but the club exercised an option for a one-year extension in December.

Paris Saint-Germain held discussions with Rashford's representatives last year. The French champions are still interested in signing the forward, who has 51 England caps, and are willing to make him one of the best-paid players in Europe. It is likely there will be other suitors too.

It is understood that Rashford's preference would be to stay at United, however, and early indications suggest that all parties hope a deal can be struck.

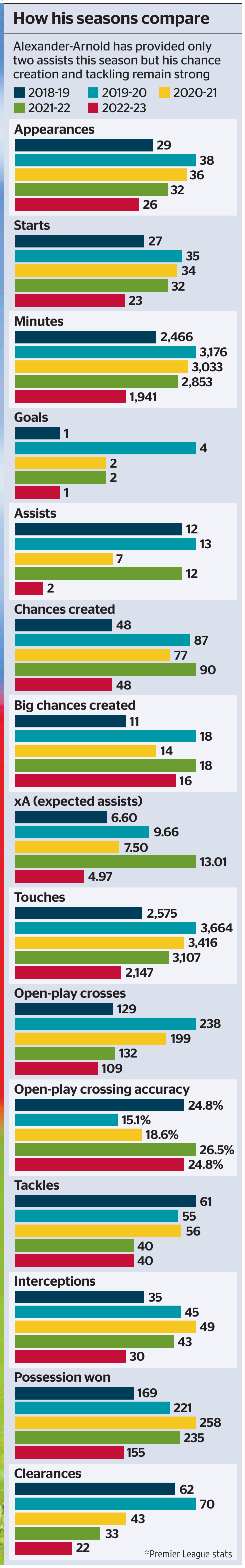
Rashford burst on to the scene seven years ago, scoring twice on his debut in the Europa League win over Midtjylland, the Danish side. He has scored 120 goals in 347 appearances for his boyhood club. Until this season his best tally in a campaign was 22.

Under Erik ten Hag, who assumed the role of United manager last summer, Rashford's game has risen to new levels and he stands fourth in the Premier League top-scorers table, behind Erling Haaland (28 goals), Harry Kane and Ivan Toney.

Last week Rashford pulled out of England's squad for their Euro 2024 qualifiers against Italy and Ukraine because of an injury he suffered in United's FA Cup win over Fulham. He went on a short break to New York and has now returned to light training at United's Carrington HQ in the hope of proving his fitness before Sunday's match away to Newcastle United.



ALAMY



Chelsea fans fear Boehly wants Earl's Court move

Co-owner warned going back on promise could prompt fan unrest on scale of Super League, writes **Henry Winter**

Chelsea fans are so concerned about the threat of a move away from Stamford Bridge to Earl's Court that they have assembled a series of questions to put to Todd Boehly, the club's chairman and co-owner. The questions, passed to The Times, will be filtered via the Fan Advisory Board to Boehly and the main board.

The club are "exploring options" on the stadium, and are not committing to anything until fully establishing the time and cost of all possibilities, but they hope to have a sense of preference on Stamford Bridge or Earl's Court later this year, ideally over the summer. Boehly has already shown himself keen to listen to supporters. The club have kept in close touch with Chelsea Pitch Owners (CPO), which owns the Stamford Bridge pitch, throughout the process and will continue to. Chelsea are determined to reach the right decision "together".

Yet they face a backlash if they choose to leave their ancestral home. "If they consider Earl's Court, we might see the same supporter demonstrations that put paid to the European Super League [in 2021]," said one prominent fan involved in the anti-Earl's Court group. "Todd Boehly has to give a guarantee that Chelsea will stay at the Bridge. Out of the 13 London clubs, only one has never moved home. Chelsea."

Chelsea had a protracted fight in 1986 to resist the property developers Marler Estates. "We had a 'Save the Bridge' campaign in the Eighties — this is Bridge two," the fan said. "England's three remaining historic club venues are Anfield, Old Trafford and Stamford Bridge. We have to stay at the Bridge."

Boehly initially signalled the new owners' intent to redevelop Stamford Bridge through a complicated stand-by-stand increase from a 40,000 to 60,000 capacity or through demolition and a total rebuild, which would require a move to Craven Cottage or Wembley for up to four seasons. Both of those options are beset with logistical problems, let alone the inevitable legal challenges from neighbours.

The alternative is moving to the site of the old Earls Court Exhibition Centre. Logistically, it would lead to least disruption. Chelsea could continue playing at Stamford Bridge while construction took place. Emotionally, it is an entirely different proposition. "All the supporters I speak to want to stay at Stamford Bridge and are quite prepared to have three or four years of disruption for a better long-term future," another fan involved in the campaign said. "What's important is legacy."

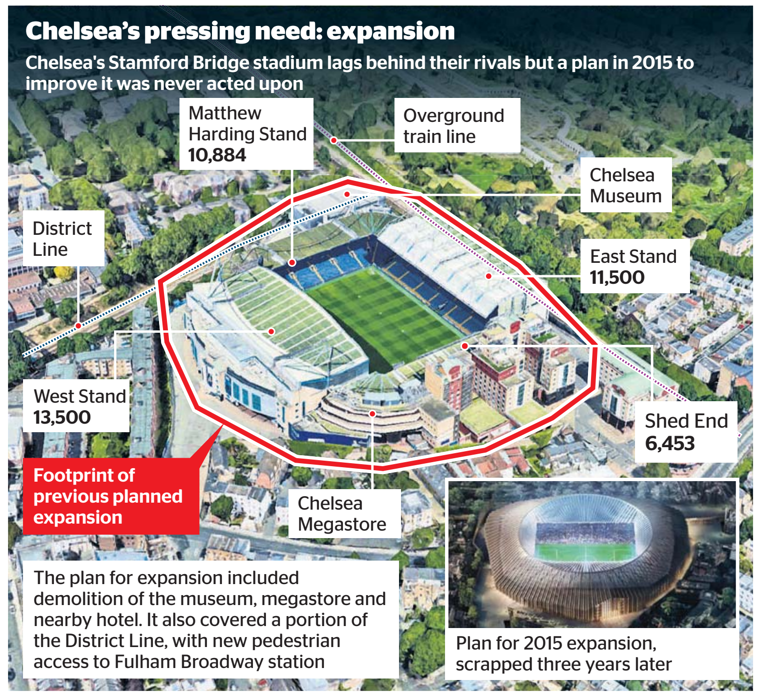
More than any player or manager debate, the stadium is the most significant subject facing Chelsea. The fans want a series of questions answered. What has happened to Boehly's pre-purchase assurances that they would not move, "respecting the history of the club"? Will the club go against CPO? Will the Fan Advisory Board, presently interviewing for three more members to double its numbers, receive a golden share that would allow it to veto any move from Stamford Bridge? Does the arrival next year of an independent regulator for football influence the board's desire for a decision this year?

There are also specific questions on the Earl's Court project. Have the club already appointed the planning consultants DP9 to work on it? Is it true that the plan would involve the demolition of two housing estates and how does that look when the capital has a shortage of affordable housing? Will all board members be transparent on any involvement with property development businesses associated with any of the projects?

One quirkier question that Chelsea fans, fearful of the ground's "Disneyfication", want answered is: was there a design to install a 20ft blue plastic lion on the roof of the kebab shack that greets passengers at Fulham Broadway station?

All sides accept that Chelsea need a better stadium, especially with Tottenham Hotspur boasting a fine new ground, Arsenal having the impressive Emirates and West Ham United having moved to a larger, albeit less soulful, home. Investment in infrastructure is one way of adding value to a club without impinging on Financial Fair Play.

Chelsea proposed a move to Battersea, south of the Thames, in 2012 but reconsidered after a fans' backlash. "The supporters' groups resisted the move then and it remains our position today that heritage and tradition are valuable," another fan said. "Home is where the heart is and our home is the Bridge."



Abramovich 'funded Vitesse in secret'

Martyn Ziegler Chief Sports Reporter

Leaked documents appear to show that Roman Abramovich, the former Chelsea owner, secretly bankrolled Vitesse Arnhem over several years — at a time when Chelsea sent numerous players on loan to the Dutch club.

Documents obtained by The Bureau of Investigative Journalism and The Guardian apparently show that loans by Abramovich, the Russian-born billionaire, enabled the 2010 takeover of Vitesse and provided €117 million (£103 million) funding to run the club.

Chelsea sent 29 players on loan to Vitesse between 2011 and 2021, including the England midfielder Mason Mount, but the Dutch club always denied they were a feeder team and instead insisted they just had a good relationship with the London side. Abramovich did not respond when asked to comment.

Chelsea were bought by a consortium headed by Todd Boehly, a US investor, last May and the club said any queries about their past relationship with Vitesse should be directed towards the previous ownership.

Uefa is not expected to investigate the claims as Chelsea and Vitesse did not play in the same European competition. The Dutch FA said it had found no evidence of rule breaches, but that it "will take appropriate action based on the evidence that comes to light".

The leaked documents appear to show that Merab Jordania, an associate of Abramovich's, was given loans from offshore companies connected to the former Chelsea owner. Jordania, a Georgian former footballer, was succeeded by another associate of Abramovich's, the Russian businessman Alexander Chigirinsky, in 2013 and the documents suggest that the loans continued until at least 2015.

In 2014 Jordania said Vitesse had been stopped from strengthening the team to try to get into the Champions League because "London didn't want that" but later withdrew his remarks.

Vitesse said they did not know how the company that had owned them, the British Virgin Islands-registered Marindale Trading, was funded. The club said: "Vitesse had no knowledge of the way this company was financed. Vitesse has not had any loan agreements."

Sport

Mike Atherton
Why cricketing lift-off in US may be bad news for the game in England
Page 60



Tottenham in turmoil
Club left floundering after Paratici ban extended worldwide by Fifa
Page 63



GB stars fly home after coach clash

Muir and Reekie ditch mentor in South Africa

EXCLUSIVE

Matt Lawton, Rick Broadbent

The Olympic silver-medal winner Laura Muir and her Great Britain team-mate Jemma Reekie have flown home from a training camp in South Africa after falling out with their long-term coach, Andy Young.

The Scottish duo had been taking part in warm-weather training in Potchefstroom, but quit and got the first plane back to the UK. They were later seen together at Loughborough University and are believed to be considering their futures.

Young, who has remained in South Africa, denied there had been an argument. "They felt I wasn't looking after myself properly, maybe thought the pressure was getting to me," he said. "I'd say they were reading too much into it."

One source suggested that the partnership may now be severed, which would leave two of Britain's best athletes without a coach only 15 months before the Olympics in Paris. Details of the argument are unclear, though sources said that some athletes found Young too controlling.

A UK Athletics spokesperson said: "We can confirm that Laura Muir and Jemma Reekie left their altitude training location last week to return home to the UK. World Class Programme staff and services are continuing to work with both athletes to ensure they receive the support they require as they review their training and competition programmes for the season ahead."

Young has been Muir's coach since she started at Glasgow University in 2011. He was in charge of the student running club at the time and texted a friend saying he had found "the next Paula Radcliffe/Kelly Holmes". Muir duly broke Holmes's British 1,500m record in 2016.

Since teaming up with Young, Muir, 29, has won an Olympic 1,500m silver medal, a World Championships bronze and seven European indoor and outdoor titles, including one in Istanbul this month. Reekie, 25, was fourth in the 800m final at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021 and is a double European Under-23 champion.

The two runners are close and Reekie moved into Muir's spare room in Glasgow during lockdown.

"We're always going to be a big help to each other," Muir, a trained vet, said previously. "We go away to training camps and are often sharing the same room for four or five weeks."

Explaining Young's impact on her career, Muir has said: "It was a lot of intensity and he showed me how to push myself. When I look back to my old training I don't remember being in a huge amount of pain or overly tired.

"He knew how much to push me and motivate me."

UK Athletics has been plagued by coaching issues recently. Last year Toni Minichiello, who coached Jessica Ennis-Hill to the Olympic heptathlon

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PREMIER LEAGUE/PA





He's still asking for Fergie-time

Sir Alex Ferguson recreated one of his iconic poses yesterday as he was inducted into the Premier League Hall of Fame, alongside Arsène Wenger. The Manchester United and Arsenal legends became the first managers to receive the honour, page 65

Peaty's mental health break

Craig Lord

The three-times Olympic gold medallist Adam Peaty has pulled out of next month's national swimming trials and July's World Championships, citing a struggle with his mental health.

Peaty, 28, said he had made the decision to focus on delivering "the best performance possible in Paris at the 2024 Olympic Games".

In a surprise announcement last night, he said: "As some people may know, I've struggled with my mental health over the past few years and I think it's important to be honest about it. I'm tired, I'm not myself and I'm not enjoying the sport as I have done for the past decade.

"Some might recognise it as burnout; I just know that over the past few years I haven't had the answers that I'm looking for. With help, now I know how I

Continued on page 58

No betting ads on shirt fronts

Martyn Ziegler Chief Sports Reporter

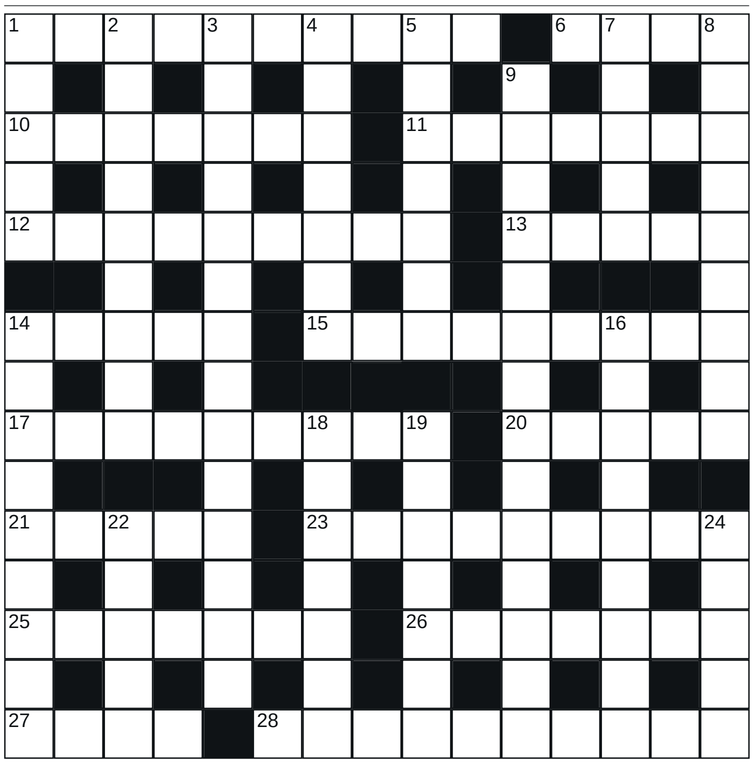
Premier League clubs are ready to agree to ban gambling companies from advertising on the front of their shirts.

The proposal, under which front-of-shirt sponsorship by betting firms would be banned but sleeve deals still permitted, is on the agenda at a top-flight shareholders' meeting today. It is expected that the clubs will support the move in order to avoid government legislation banning gambling advertising completely.

A white paper on gambling is due to be published by the government next month but ministers have signalled that it will not include shirt sponsorship restrictions if a voluntary agreement is reached instead. A final vote on the ban may be put off until the Premier League's summer meeting in June but it

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Times Crossword 28,564



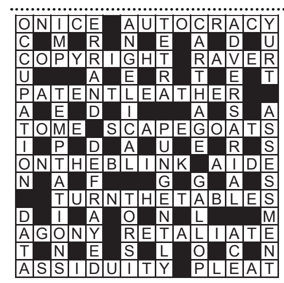
ACROSS

1 Hint received by an old cleric who may be Victorian (10)
6 Beastly European's left dry (4)
10 French soldier following horse and carriage (7)
11 Bell possibly attached to head of awful monster (7)
12 Good person spoke — had trouble with speech (9)
13 Bit to eat, not cold, before a dance (5)
14 Beautiful female bird crossing sides of lake (5)
15 Treated like little piggies etc.? (9)
17 An unknown draught in front part of room? (3,6)
20 Pick up pounds, having additional merit (5)
21 Climber is needing energy in repeated runs (5)
23 Archdeacon coming to Italian city — good undertaking (9)
25 A part of the body in which one is most painful (7)
26 Wild flower girl seizing knight (7)
27 Our late Queen as shown in *The Times* (4)
28 Showing courage, in hurry, being unable to hear? (10)

DOWN

1 Trees and how they finish up in wood-burners? (5)
2 Therapy's beginning — really — through touch (9)
3 More than one prison is a pit internee gathered again (14)
4 Time old reprobate perhaps announced for excursion (3,4)
5 Having passageways or a road invaded by rebel (7)
7 The man drowning in strange fluid (5)
8 Great Dane on the loose in outside refreshment area (3,6)
9 Explosive ingredient: colonel rules it must be deployed (14)
14 Greeting Swiss city at start of evening, be out for a long time (9)
16 Study one supposedly monstrous location, being well prepared (9)
18 Fan with flower, conveying X? (7)
19 Convinced cleric currently upset about nothing (3,4)
22 Sort of sound was weirdly going round church (5)
24 Managed to travel on train avoiding wet times (3,2)

Yesterday's solution 28,563



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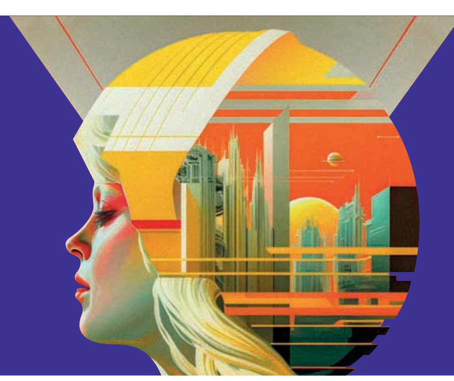
08 HOW TO COMBAT TRIANGULATION FRAUD

14 THE RISE OF THE DE-INFLUENCERS

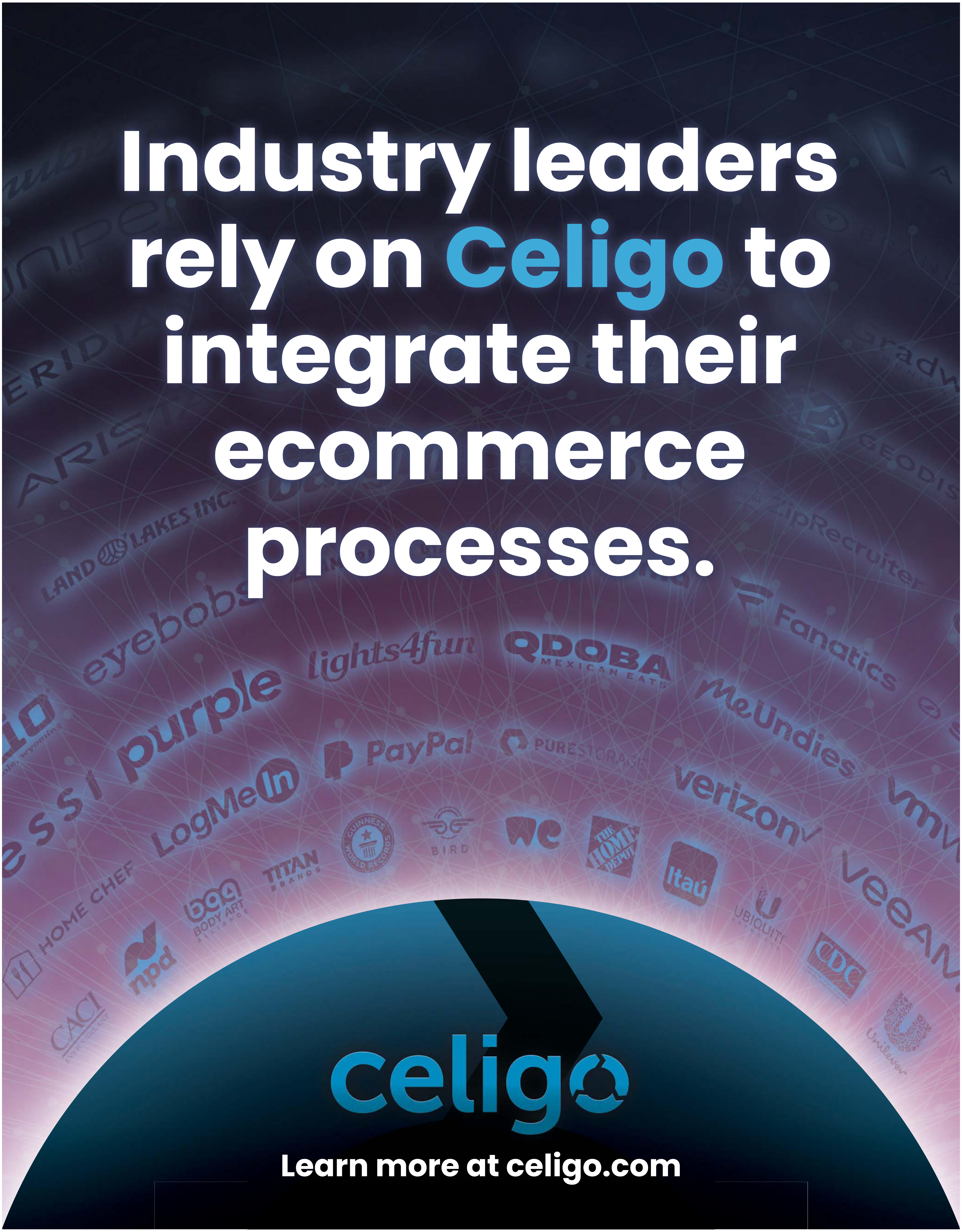


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Contributors

Marc Ambasna-Jones
A journalist specialising in business, technology and sustainability. His work has been published in *The Guardian*, *Computer Weekly* and *ERP Today*.

Simon Brooke
A freelance journalist with 25 years' experience of covering topics such as finance, marketing and communications for a wide range of outlets.

Ben Edwards
A freelance journalist with more than a decade of experience. He specialises in writing about business, finance, technology and the law.

Virginia Matthews
A Fleet Street-trained reporter, editor and columnist with extensive experience of daily news and feature writing for daily and weekly publications.

Amy Nguyen
A researcher and writer focusing on the nexus of sustainable business, fashion and supply chains.

Emily Seares
An award-winning business journalist and editor who writes for a wide range of national publications.

Ouida Taaffe
The editor of *Financial World*, the magazine of the London Institute of Banking & Finance. She previously covered the telecoms market.

Jonathan Weinberg
A freelance writer, media consultant and trainer specialising in technology, business and the future of work and society.

Raconteur

Campaign manager
Shira Goldwater

Reports editor
Ian Deering

Deputy reports editor
James Sutton

Editor
Sarah Vizard

Chief sub-editor
Neil Cole

Sub-editor
Christina Ryder

Commercial content editors
Laura Bithell
Joy Persaud

Associate commercial editor
Phoebe Borwell

Head of production
Justyna O'Connell

Design/production assistant
Louis Nassé

Design
Kellie Jerrard
Harry Lewis-Irlam
Colm McDermott
Samuele Motta
Sean Wyatt-Livesley

Illustration
Celina Lucey

Design director
Tim Whitlock

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LOCALISM

High-street ken: who's sitting pretty for the 15-minute city?

Along with the continuing popularity of hybrid working, a growing movement espousing eco-conscious localism is changing urban shopping patterns. This has already prompted several retailers to rethink their bricks-and-mortar strategies

Simon Brooke

The basic idea underlying the 15-minute city is simple: if we're living in any part of it, our shopping, leisure, healthcare and transport facilities should all be within a quarter of an hour's walk or leisurely bike ride from home.

The concept has earned Professor Carlos Moreno several accolades since he proposed it in 2016 as a way to challenge the dominance of the motor car and so make urban environments greener and more liveable. Given its associations with the use of traffic restrictions such as ultra-low emission zones, the 15-minute city has also attracted conspiracy theories about ghettoisation. But people needn't worry too much about such an outcome, however unlikely that is, because the first real working models are still some way off.

Nonetheless, retailers should note that local authorities have become significantly more interested in urban centres than out-of-town developments of late. Councils in Birmingham, Oxford, Sheffield and Waltham Forest, north London, are all exploring the potential of the 15-minute city, for instance.

"The concept is being implemented here by maintaining local centres where there is already a good spread of facilities, including for shopping, public transport, health and leisure," says a spokesman for Oxford City Council. "Keeping all of these clustered together attracts more people to a given area and helps it to stay vibrant."

Stressing the importance of maintaining footfall in keeping such facilities viable, he adds that the council will "direct new developments, including workplaces, as much as we can to our district and local centres. Where the council owns shops, for instance, it's vital to set rents at a level that community businesses can afford."

During the Covid crisis, the London Borough of Waltham Forest conducted an extensive research project, including focus groups, to learn exactly what its residents wanted from their localities.

"We knew that old-fashioned concepts of cities didn't always make people healthier and happier," says a spokesman for the council. "We want everyone to be able to meet most, if not all, of their needs within a walk or short bike ride from home."



Richard Klune via Getty Images

The result has been a plan to introduce a 15-minute neighbourhood that supports local retailers and uses low-carbon modes of transport, such as cargo bikes and electric vehicles, for last-mile deliveries.

The pandemic has helped to build support for Moreno's ideas, which are based on the desire to make local communities more cohesive. That's the view of Tom Whittington, director of retail and leisure research at real-estate giant Savills. He says: "As things began to open up after the lockdowns, people started to experience the 15-minute community themselves. Part of that change was what we call retail reinvention."

A change in footfall patterns resulting from the widespread adoption of hybrid working means that areas that once mainly hosted shops, for instance, might see more developments devoted to leisure, say, thereby widening the range of facilities on offer in those areas.

"With more people working from home, local shops that were busy only on Saturdays may find that they have customers throughout the week," Whittington says.

He adds that traditional out-of-town players such as Ikea and B&Q, both of which are opening high-street stores, will gain access to a whole new group of consumers who don't have cars.

Since January, B&Q has been testing smaller store formats under a new blueprint known as B&Q Local. Eight such stores have opened so far and another is due to start trading in Sutton, south London, in the next few months. Customers will find everything that they might expect to see at a conventional DIY superstore, including kitchen and bathroom design services, according to the firm's strategy and development director, Chris Bargate.

"Our stores have traditionally been located out of town, so the launch of B&Q Local means that more customers will have our products and services on their doorsteps," he says.

The reimagined high street is even attracting the attention of department stores and garden centres. Products that were previously sold only at John Lewis are being stocked in branches of Waitrose, while Dobbies, the 150-year-old garden supplies chain, has opened Little Dobbies in Edinburgh, Bristol and Chiswick, west London.

The 15-minute city also has implications for ecommerce, notes Peter Blackburn, international commercial director at InPost, a logistics operator specialising in parcel delivery and collection lockers.

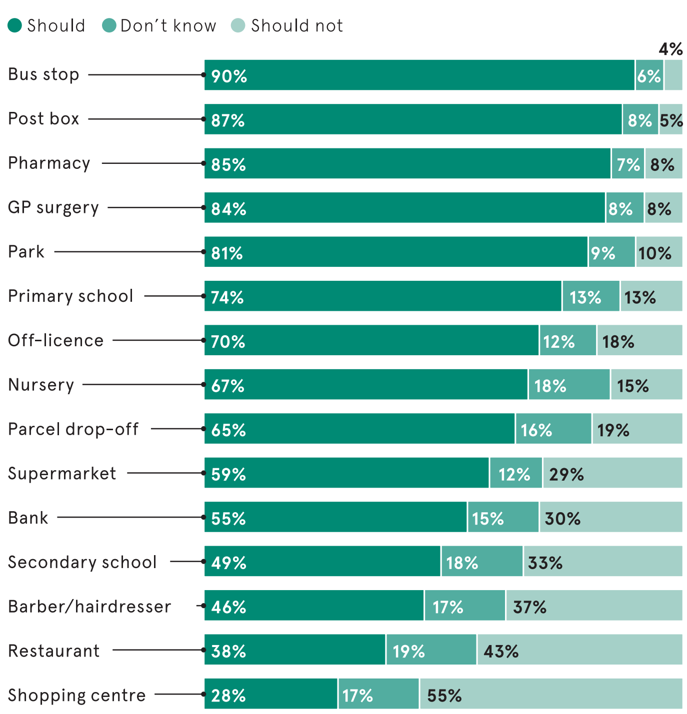
These lockers can "expand the breadth of postal services available in a local area and bridge the gap between online and high-street shopping", he says.

Blackburn explains that parcel lockers are ideal for "trip-twinning", in that they provide a quick and easy way for shoppers to receive or return online purchases while nipping out to their local high street to grab a coffee or a few groceries.

The idealised 15-minute city may still be something of a utopian concept. But, with its principles of localism, convenience and eco-friendly transport already finding strong support from local authorities around the world, its piecemeal adoption is likely to be significant in the future of retail.

FEW BRITONS CONSIDER IT A PRIORITY TO HAVE A SHOPPING CENTRE WITHIN 15 MINUTES' WALK OF THEIR HOMES

UK consumers' responses when asked: should the following amenities be within a 15-minute walk of all homes in your neighbourhood?

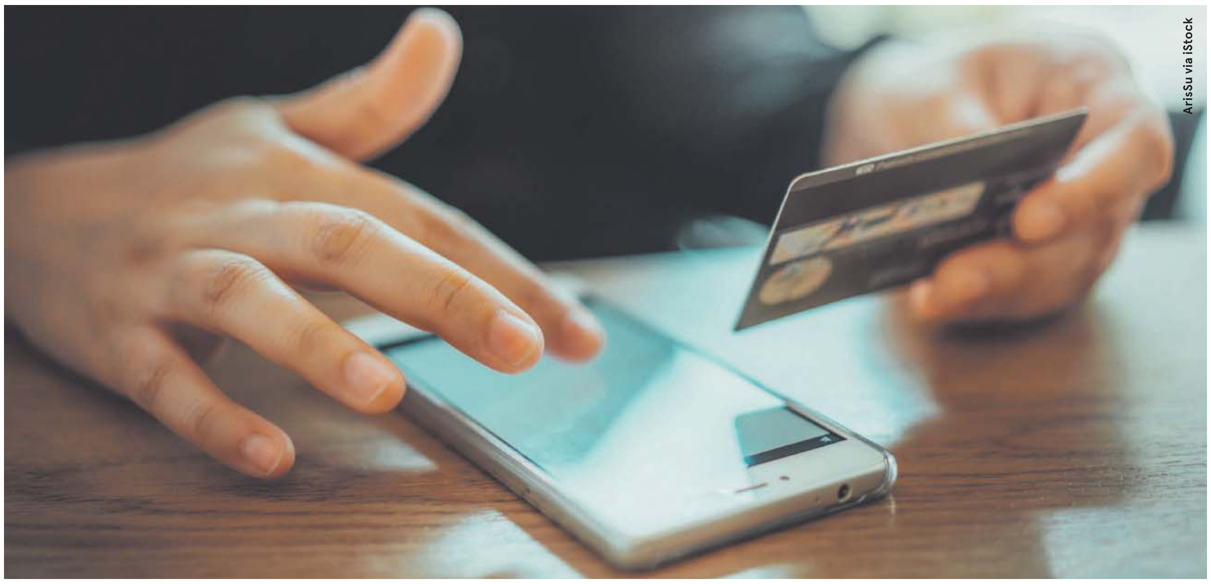


YouGov, 2023

REGULATION

What the revised data protection and digital information bill means for retailers

The government's second attempt at reforming the GDPR focuses on cutting red tape and business costs. Can it achieve this without removing crucial safeguards?



ArisSu via iStock

Jonathan Weinberg

Ever since the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) came into force in the UK in 2018, it has attracted both praise and criticism, often in equal measure. Nonetheless, the common view held by politicians, lawyers and IT experts in light of Brexit has been that Westminster's approach to regulation in this area will diverge from that of Brussels.

Such a split became even more likely on 8 March when the government introduced the second iteration of its data protection and digital information bill to Parliament. (The original bill on which it's largely based stalled after its first reading when Liz Truss became prime minister in September 2022.)

This is a generally promising development for UK retailers working under the GDPR. The bill's enactment could lighten the data management burden, do away with risk assessments and maybe even relieve some firms from having to employ a dedicated data protection officer.

Whatever happens when the bill is finally enacted, public trust has to be maintained. That's the view of Gavin Freeguard, interim head of public policy at the Open Data Institute, the not-for-profit research body co-founded by Sir Tim Berners-Lee.

Freeguard fears that the proposed legislation risks "diluting the existing rights, protections and redress mechanisms that provide transparency" over how personal data is stewarded. Data protection impact assessments, which are designed to identify and mitigate risks when processing personal data, can be "a boon, not a burden" to business, he argues, adding that provisions in the bill should also deal with the need for better infrastructure to support data intermediaries.

"All this is particularly vital given the excitement surrounding generative AI, which is driven by data. The right regulations, as part of an open and trustworthy data ecosystem, will let us unlock benefits. But the wrong ones could result in undesirable outcomes that diminish the potential returns to both society and the economy," Freeguard warns. "Such outcomes include the proliferation of data and practices that aren't trusted."

Sarah Simpson, a senior associate in the intellectual property team at international law firm Katten, accepts that the government's main aim with its new bill is to lighten the regulatory burden. There are clear benefits in it for retailers, she says, although there are concerns that proposals which would remove cookie consent banners from websites could result in more profiling and tracking, reducing transparency surrounding the collection of personal data.

"Changes to the rules governing direct marketing – for instance, broadening the so-called soft opt-in to include a simple means of refusing such marketing materials – will be hugely beneficial to retail companies," she predicts. "At present, the soft opt-in is limited to where individuals have bought goods or services from businesses previously, enabling such businesses to continue marketing to them."

Simpson explains that, if the legislation lets retailers target consumers they don't yet have a relationship with by simply giving them the chance to unsubscribe by clicking an opt-out link, this could have a big impact on the "potential to market to individuals they're unable to target at present, thereby increasing sales and improving revenue".

But she warns: "If customers aren't given the option to control how their data is collected, they may seek clarification of this in other ways, such as via subject-access requests. These are an administrative headache that can be hugely costly for businesses to deal with."

There are also concerns that retailers that sell to markets in the EU could need to abide by both the new UK legislation and the GDPR.

Other legal experts believe that the proposed changes concerning cookies will turn out to be limited. Andrew Kimble, a partner specialising in data protection at law firm Womble Bond Dickinson, is one of them. He says that the bill is "not quite the rewrite of the GDPR and cookies law that was perhaps anticipated", suggesting that its "main thrust" will stay the same in keeping high standards in data protection.

But he adds: "Changes to the cookies regime, proposed in the original bill and retained in this revision, may mean that consent is no longer required for the use of certain analytical cookies and similar technologies where the data is being used to improve services or websites. This will be well received by ecommerce businesses and website users alike."

James Cull is a solutions engineer at Rokt, an ecommerce tech provider that includes Domino's Pizza and Ticketmaster among its clients. He thinks that the GDPR's requirement on retailers to secure consent before using data for marketing purposes has generally detracted from the customer experience. Cull hopes that the legislation will give clear guidance on the proper use of data for direct and indirect marketing. This would offer consumers "a smoother and satisfactory ecommerce journey", given that they want "a relevant shopping experience – similar to one they'd receive when speaking to a great salesperson in a store".

He suggests that a focus on "legitimate interest" in the use of direct marketing would help retailers. For instance, if the personal data used by marketers is handled correctly and respects all data privacy rights, it could then be processed for that purpose on a particular website.

Cull explains: "This would enable retailers and brands to create a more relevant customer experience that's tailored to each individual's needs. This might even include quality measures such as frequency caps or the complete suppression of ads to existing customers, offering a superior experience in every case."

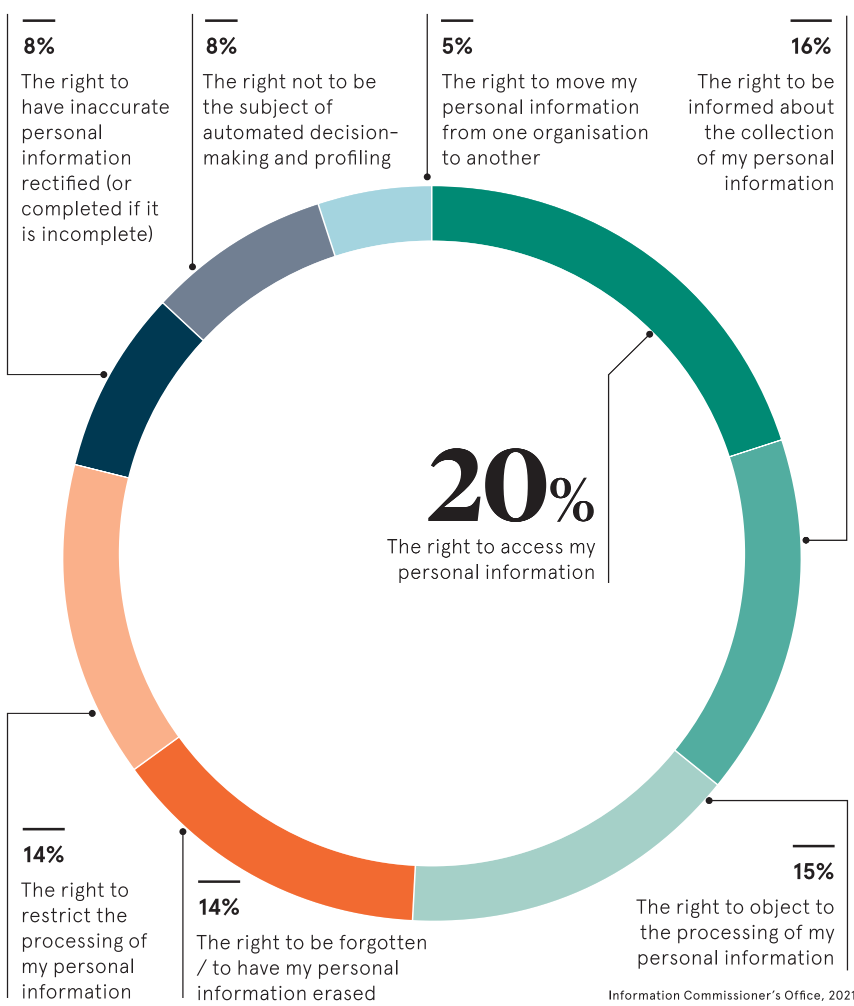
Sarah Pearce is a partner specialising in data privacy and security at law firm Hunton Andrews Kurth. She says that questions remain about the UK's ability to satisfy the EU authorities that its new provisions remain "essentially equivalent", bearing in mind that it took more than a year of talks to persuade Brussels to sign a so-called data adequacy agreement in 2021. This was a formal recognition of the UK's high standards in data protection, allowing the continued inflow of personal data from the EU.

But Pearce adds that many retailers would welcome the bill's statement that records of processing will be required only for entities using processing activities that are likely to pose a "high risk to the rights and freedoms of data subjects".

She adds: "Most online retailers are unlikely to be carrying out such processing. The removal of this obligation, which some see as overly burdensome, is likely to be welcomed by the industry."

CONSUMERS PRIORITISE THE RIGHT TO ACCESS DATA HELD ON THEM

Percentage of UK consumers giving the following responses when asked: what do you consider to be your most important right relating to the personal data that organisations hold?



Information Commissioner's Office, 2021

Commercial feature



22.3%

of gen Z are likely to abandon the checkout process if they have to make an account on the merchant's website or app

78.7%

of millennial respondents are 'very likely' or 'somewhat likely' to abandon the checkout in the middle of an online payment if their preferred payment method isn't available

57%

of 16- to 24-year-olds feel inflation and the increased cost of living will encourage them to use BNPL services

Ecommpay, 2022

Why retailers can't afford to ignore generational payment preferences

Millennials and gen Z both want fast, frictionless payment experiences, but there are also key differences between the generations

Millennials – those born between 1981 and 1996 – are now the world's largest consumer group. But gen Z – the generation born between 1997 and 2012 – is hot on their heels. So how do their ecommerce expectations differ? And more importantly, how can merchants meet them?

"With millennials, there's an expectation that the payments process should be smooth, seamless and always work," says Moshe Winegarten, chief revenue officer at Ecommpay, an international payment service provider.

Gen-Z consumers feel the same way. But they also take such experiences – which many retailers have worked hard to achieve – for granted. "It's a baseline for them," says Olga Karablina, head of payment product development and partner relations at Ecommpay. "It's about what else you do on top to ensure they're happy and willing to come back."

In fact, one bad payment experience could push them into the arms of a rival retailer. "If there's a glitch – their card has funds on it, but it's been declined and they don't know why – you lose the customer," says Winegarten.

This may not happen as often with gen Z as it does with millennials. According to research commissioned by Ecommpay, millennials are twice as likely to use a credit card than gen Z and far more keen to use a debit card too (52.9% versus 31.5%). Gen-Z consumers are less bothered by the lack of a local payment option, however, with just 6.7% of 16- to 24-year-olds claiming it would cause them to abandon the checkout as opposed to 12.4% of millennials.

Ecommpay's research also found that almost two-thirds (65%) of gen-Z respondents were "very likely" or "somewhat likely" to abandon the checkout in the middle of an online payment if their preferred payment method isn't available. For millennials, the figure is even higher at 78.7%. That's a lot of lost sales simply due to the lack of additional payment options, like Apple Pay or Google Pay.

Furthermore, 22.3% of gen Z are likely to abandon the checkout process if they have to make an account on the merchant's website or app – a considerably higher percentage than for millennials (13.1%). Gen-Z shoppers also feel almost twice as uncomfortable as millennials when it comes to sharing their card details online (20.1% versus 10.5%). This suggests that slowing down the checkout process to ask for personal information, or requesting card details, could potentially damage conversion rates among gen-Z customers.

Buy now, pay later

Both generations are keen to see alternative payment options at the checkout – including buy now, pay later (BNPL). These services allow consumers to spread the costs of their purchases, often while incurring little to no interest. One in ten gen-Z consumers expect to use BNPL more over the next five years, as is an even higher percentage of millennials (14.2%). In addition, Ecommpay's research found that around 57% of 16- to 24-year-olds, and almost 56% of 25- to 34-year-olds, feel the increasing cost of living and inflation will encourage them to use such services more.

Gen Z is less worried than millennials about getting into debt through BNPL, with twice as many millennials citing it as a concern compared with gen Z (36.3% versus 18%). Likewise, the risks of late charges and more interest were only of concern to 17.2% of gen Z, whereas 27.9% of 24- to 34-year-olds thought this was an issue. Ecommpay's new BNPL solution helps to address these fears and ensure responsible lending, as it uses a robust risk scoring system tailored to different industries, like retail or travel.

When asked if businesses were doing enough to educate consumers about the BNPL option at the checkout, only 36.8% of gen-Z respondents said 'no' compared with 52.9% of millennials. When it comes to regulation, 35.3% of gen Z said that BNPL needs to be further regulated. Millennials feel even stronger about better regulation, with 60.7% of respondents pushing for more rules to be implemented within this credit category. This appears to show that millennials are more up-to-speed with both the benefits and potential risks of BNPL.

However, when asked what changes would encourage them to use BNPL as a payment option, twice as many gen-Z respondents cited 'more pre-contractual explanations with clarity on processes and support' (22.8% versus 10.9%). This shows that gen Z are perhaps not as confident as they might seem about precisely what BNPL services entail.

"Yes, there has to be a fast, frictionless flow at the checkout to mitigate the chance of an abandoned basket," says Karablina. "But in the case of BNPL, it's the responsibility of a trusted lender to provide a clear message within this flow of payment to help the consumer fully understand what they're doing."

> "In the case of BNPL, it's the responsibility of a trusted lender to provide a clear message within this flow of payment

Looking ahead

Although open-banking payment options have yet to make much impact on ecommerce – not least because the likes of Apple and Google Pay already offer consumers quick and secure means of paying by card – it doesn't hurt to offer millennials and gen Z a range of options at the checkout. However, the fact that only 13.9% of gen-Z consumers believe they completely understand what open banking is and how it is used, compared with 24.1% of 25- to 34-year-olds, suggests that gen Z may not grasp how checkout options like 'pay by bank' actually work.

Looking ahead, social shopping is likely to grow in importance. "Gen Z wants to buy what they see on Instagram, and being able to take payments in that space is something we're beginning to see and support," says Winegarten. Gen Z is also the most open to paying with crypto, with 23% of 16- to 24-year-olds saying they would use it if it were offered as a payment option.

Ecommerce merchants need a trusted partner who understands these generational nuances. Because while millennials and gen Z share some similarities when it comes to payments, they also differ in countless subtle ways, such as their approach to new options like BNPL and crypto, their dislike of account creation requirements and overall brand loyalty. The merchants that recognise this and adapt their processes accordingly will ultimately be those who succeed.

For more information visit ecommpay.com

ecommpay



AUTOMATION

Do androids dream of electric kettles? Why retail's getting robotic

The idea of being greeted by an in-store robot might put some people off their shopping, but the next wave of automation is already hitting the high street

Marc Ambasna-Jones

Anyone who has visited a branch of Currys recently – or perhaps a Decathlon in Spain or even a Lowe's hardware store in San Francisco – may already have encountered a retail robot.

These few examples mark the start of something huge on the high street if a forecast by tech analyst ABI Research is to be believed. Last year it predicted that the annual revenue of the emerging sector providing retail robotics could exceed $8.4bn (£6.9bn) by 2030, so perhaps we'd better get used to the idea of seeing more silicon-based shop staff.

Robotics, and automation more generally, represent an opportunity for retailers as they wrestle with the constant challenge of managing the omnichannel experiences they offer while their costs rise and shoppers' habits change. This technology was first used by the retail industry in back-office functions such as warehousing, but it has been adopted more recently for last-mile fulfilment – Co-op's use of home delivery robots from Starship Technologies, for instance – and assistance on the shop floor.

Bearing in mind how deeply the self-service checkout has divided opinion among supermarket shoppers over the years, it should come as no surprise that not everyone is a fan of this latest development – certainly not the SoftBank customers who assaulted its friendly humanoid bots in 2015. (Last year the Japanese conglomerate confirmed that it was discontinuing their production after slashing jobs at its robotics arm, as the demand for them hadn't met expectations.)

Even Currys' new robot has been mocked on TikTok for having a name similar to the slang term for the veterinary tranquiliser that's widely abused as a recreational drug.

Perhaps that's a little unfair. The KettyBot, named by its Chinese manufacturer Pudu Robotics, is going down a storm, reports Ainsley Sykes, head of commercial initiatives and retail design at Currys.

"Families, especially those with young kids, have generally been mesmerised by the robot and what it can do," says Sykes, who admits that staff in the four stores trialling the new tech were "apprehensive" about their plastic colleagues at first.

They feel far less threatened now, recognising that the KettyBots are there not to take their jobs but to help them deal with customers on the front line, he stresses, adding that the bots have generated a wealth of useful data about their interactions with customers.

And the name? "Were we to permanently introduce these robots into our stores", Sykes says, "we would look to work with our colleagues to find them a new name."

For now, the KettyBot reflects how some of the world's larger retailers are thinking, according to Miya Knights, retail technology consultant and co-author of *Amazon* and *Omnichannel Retail*. She reports that robots are part of a more general move towards in-store automation. Two notable examples she cites are the adoption of Volumental's 3D foot scanner by several shoe retailers and Target's partnership with vendor Clockwork to provide a machine offering 10-minute manicures to busy shoppers.

As retailers continue to automate, it raises an obvious question about their motives: are they really trying to improve the customer experience or are they seeking to reduce their labour costs?

It's likely to be a bit of both, according to Knights. She suggests that, while companies face a real challenge in balancing technological efficiency and the human touch, reducing the amount of time that front-line employees need to spend on low-value tasks could give them more scope to work on turning visitors to their stores into loyal customers and even brand advocates.

It's a view shared by Stuart Higgins, partner at management consultancy BearingPoint. He suggests that using robots to do menial work should enable store staff to spend more time on "more value-adding and satisfying roles focused on improving customer satisfaction and sales". He cites the KettyBot as a good example of this.

The key, of course, is to understand what customers might want from their human and synthetic shop assistants respectively and to work out how to deliver those things.

Although some of the early breed of in-store robots might seem a little gimmicky, Higgins suggests that some retailers have made real progress in finding ways for them to make the shopping experience smoother and more efficient.

"We saw a recent example of this in Zara's concept store at Battersea Power Station in London," he says. "If a customer wants to collect an

> **Families, especially those with young kids, have generally been mesmerised by the robot and what it can do**

online order from here, they simply take their confirmation email and scan the barcode on it at the collection point."

Behind the scenes, all parcels awaiting collection are held in a small, highly automated warehouse. Acting on the barcoded information, its loading system will locate and retrieve the requested parcel, presenting it to the customer through a hatch.

This is, Higgins says, "a brilliant example of back-of-house robotics smoothing the customer journey. At the same time, it frees store colleagues to work on more customer-facing tasks."

It's the sort of thing that PAL Robotics has been doing with its StockBot, which has been adopted by sports retail giant Decathlon.

Deploying robots effectively in a store is a complex undertaking, says Alexandre Saldes Barbera, director of innovation business development at PAL Robotics, which also has a humanoid retail bot called ARI.

"The store is a dynamic environment," he says. "The retailer may be changing things around in it daily."

To this end, StockBot can perform automated inventory counts several times a day if required. It's also able to pinpoint the location of any given product on the premises.

Such applications should, for the moment at least, be the preferred direction for retailers to take when it comes to automation, according to Higgins. He also throws shop-floor cleaning into this mix, citing Marty, the googly-eyed bot that patrols US grocery outlets run by The Giant Company.

"One thing is certain," he says. "The democratisation of robotics in the workplace will enable more automation projects in the near future and the faster, more agile deployment of these technologies."

This, he adds, should help retailers to increase the efficiency of their store operations and improve customer satisfaction.

> **The democratisation of robotics in the workplace will enable more automation projects in the near future**

In a sense, this is about going back to basics – retailers should determine the most common niggles their customers have and how this new tech could solve these recurring problems. Knights points to the growing influence of gen Z, the first fully digital-native generation that has grown up not knowing a time when ecommerce didn't exist.

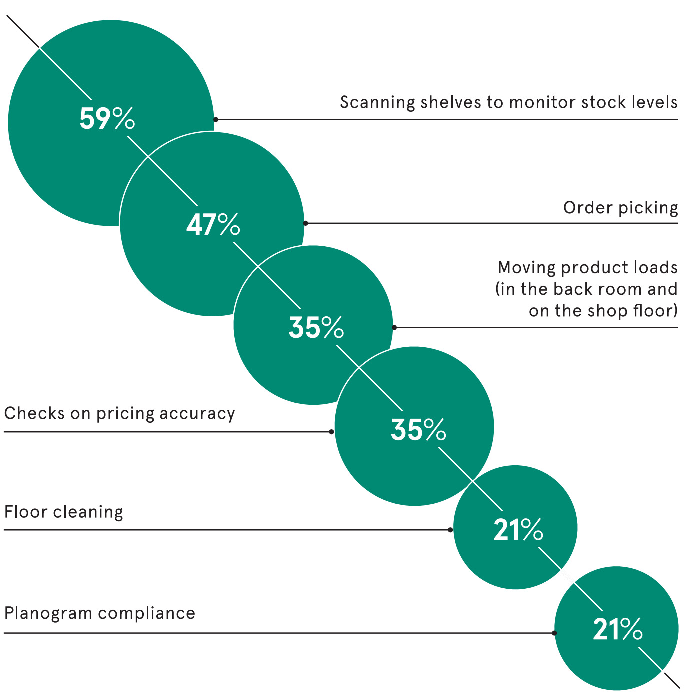
"Gen-Z shoppers want self-service options and they expect accurate inventory information and rapid fulfilment," she notes. "Many surveys have found that they're also in favour of robots."

That's the challenge. Where can retailers get the most return from automation and deliver the sort of seamless experiences that all consumers, not only gen Zers, increasingly demand? Robots almost certainly have a role to play in areas such as inventory and fulfilment. Given the drive for improved omnichannel experiences, this makes a lot of sense. The value of putting bots on the shop floor, giving them faces and asking them to schmooze customers may be harder to gauge.

If you do go down that route, just be careful what you name them – although there are probably worse things to happen to a robot than viral humiliation on social media. ●

MOST LARGE RETAILERS ENVISAGE THAT ROBOTS WILL BE DEPLOYED IN NON-CUSTOMER-FACING ROLES

Large retailers' most common responses when asked: which activities are likely to be most effective applications for robots in your business?



RetailWire, Brain Corp, 2021

Commercial feature

DATA-CONSCIOUS CONSUMERS

Consumer behaviour and attitudes toward data privacy in online and in-store retail

Empathy.co, 2022



How brands can bridge the online trust gap

Consumers are fed up with retailers that mishandle their personal data. How can ecommerce firms maintain their trust and protect privacy?

In business, trust is everything. Without it, it is impossible to build a successful and sustainable brand. And consumers are less and less likely to forgive if they feel taken for granted.

It is perhaps surprising, then, that so many ecommerce retailers are failing to meet consumer expectations around trust, putting their brands at risk. Shoppers regularly complain about intrusive data tracking processes that lead to them being bombarded by irrelevant product recommendations.

They are also tired of being followed around the internet for weeks after visiting a retailer's website.

More worryingly, customer data breaches have become commonplace, putting company reputations at risk. In January, a major cyber-attack on sportswear giant JD Sports led to the personal and financial information of 10 million people being exposed.

Retailers face growing regulatory scrutiny and are under pressure to change. But how can they offer a truly personalised shopping experience while protecting privacy?

Digital trust is everything

A lot of problems link back to practices originated by the world's biggest tech firms, says Ángel Maldonado, the founder and chief executive of Empathy.co, a leading ethical commerce search and discovery platform.

"Over the years the biggest players have tried to commoditise consumers and treat them as objects, and smaller retailers have copied their ideas," he says.

"But just as you don't hear about people trusting tech giants like they did 10 years ago, those same questions are now being asked about retail brands. As a result, consumers are moving towards those brands that make digital trust a priority."

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), which regulates UK ecommerce firms, has significantly strengthened its rules. Consumers must now be given the option to 'accept' or 'reject' a company's data collection policies when they arrive at its website. Choosing 'reject' means denying retailers an important stream of intelligence.

However, there are still loopholes retailers can abuse. Customers that do not allow their data to be collected can have their location tracked via their IP address, for example. And their personal data will often be governed by separate agreements between the retailer and its suppliers that the customer is unaware of.

"You can still end up getting unsolicited emails or being exposed in a data breach, all of which erodes trust," says Maldonado.

> **The tide has turned and retailers that don't move with it are likely to struggle in the years ahead**

How Empathy.co helps to solve the problem

Empathy.co works with over 500 brands worldwide to help them bridge this trust gap while also offering a truly personalised shopping experience through search and discovery. Clients ranging from SMEs up to giants such as Zara-owner Inditex, French grocer Carrefour and US retail group Kroger have benefited from its ethical search and discovery tools.

Using responsible AI, the Empathy Platform allows retailers 'read-only' personalised experiences that don't need to integrate consent-tracking banners or synchronise privacy policy pages.

Empathy.co also gives consumers more control over their data when they interact with a search box. For example, a consumer's search history or preferences can be stored within their sphere of privacy and control.

According to Empathy.co's Retail Trust Index, a survey of thousands of UK consumers, only one in five consumers trust the leading UK retailers. The regulatory pressure to improve customer data handling is also likely to increase.

A McKinsey survey of more than 1,300 business leaders and 3,000 consumers globally found that establishing digital trust in products and experiences that leverage AI, digital technologies and data can also promote growth.

Such companies were more likely than others to see annual growth rates of at least 10% on their top and bottom lines, it found. However, only a small percentage of those surveyed were set to meet the necessary standards.

Ecommerce firms must adapt to this new normal of ethical commerce or risk being left behind, Maldonado says.

"A decade ago when we started we were very much swimming against the tide. But now the tide has turned and retailers that don't move with it are likely to struggle in the years ahead."

For more information please visit empathy.co/learn-more

EMPATHY.CO


Kasper Rasmussen via Unsplash

CRIME

Warning sines: how to detect and prevent triangulation fraud

This sophisticated online scam, which is fast gaining popularity among criminals, is hard for etailers to combat. Nonetheless, security experts believe that merchants could and should do more to protect themselves

Ben Edwards

As consumers hunted for bargains in the run-up to Christmas last year, many could have unwittingly helped cybercriminals to pocket millions of pounds through an ecommerce scam known as triangulation fraud.

In this type of fraud, a criminal posts fake listings on an online marketplace, advertising goods at a heavy discount to attract customers. Having taken payment for a product through the marketplace, the fraudster then uses credit card details stolen from someone else to obtain that product from a legitimate merchant. The merchant fulfils the fraudster's order and ships the product to the original customer, with neither party aware that any crime has been committed. Eventually, once the person whose details were stolen disputes the payment with their credit card provider, the merchant will discover that it was defrauded when it receives a chargeback demand. Little evidence can be traced back to the fraudster.

There is no comprehensive data on the scale of the crime because it can be hard to pinpoint and often goes unreported, written off by merchants as a cost of doing business. But experts believe that it constitutes a significant proportion of all card-not-present (CNP) fraud. In January 2019, a study published by Juniper Research estimated that CNP fraud would cost retail businesses worldwide an average of $26bn (£21bn) annually over the five years to the end of 2023.

One criminal gang operating from Southeast Asia made about $660m in November 2022, aided partly by triangulation fraud, according to Signifyd, a software developer specialising in fraud prevention.

The crime was "extremely well coordinated and precise", reports Xavier Sheikrojan, senior risk intelligence manager at Signifyd. "It involved not only triangulation fraud but also a mixed bag of techniques including account takeover and address manipulation."

Sheikrojan points out that the gang started on a small scale, probing various merchants' weaknesses first before launching a wider attack. Such fraudsters are usually large criminal enterprises using different teams with specialist skills, such as acquiring stolen credit cards or manipulating customer-service agents into processing orders that have been blocked by the merchant's systems.

"The fraudsters are turning to AI-based technology such as machine learning in the same way merchants have been doing to protect their revenues. This trend is driving the scale and speed of these attacks," he says. "We shouldn't see these fraudsters as hoodie-clad loners in dark garages. We should see them as well-funded and highly organised businesses."

Festive periods are a particularly happy hunting ground for triangulation fraudsters. For one thing, the increased ecommerce traffic enables them to blend in better. For another, shoppers are more primed to seek bargains and so will be less wary of deals offering big discounts. Also, because a gift buyer is more likely to ask a merchant to ship their order directly to the recipient, the fact that the billing address differs from the delivery address won't automatically arouse suspicion.

Another reason why triangulation fraud is hard to spot is that the perpetrators will often focus on goods worth less than £300. These could be anything from sunglasses and headphones to nutritional supplements and pet supplies, Sheikrojan says.

The crime is not only committed on legitimate online marketplaces, reports Michael Reitblat, co-founder and CEO of fraud-prevention platform Forter. In some cases, fraudsters have built their own ecommerce sites, potentially enabling them to steal credit card details.

While the growth in etail marketplaces and the broader shift to online shopping during the pandemic have fuelled triangulation fraud, the economic downturn may also give it a further boost. That's the view of Francesca Titus, a partner and barrister specialising in white-collar crime cases at McGuireWoods.

"Fraud is on the increase across the board. This is the latest type to emerge," she says. "It's a clear growth area that will be fuelled by the cost-of-living crisis as shoppers continue to seek better value for money."

While there is plenty of detection tech available to help merchants protect themselves, there are several basic preventive measures they can take. So says Monica Eaton, founder of Fi911, a specialist in chargeback fraud prevention.

"One thing a merchant can look for is suspicious patterns relating to the card being used," she advises. "Instead of immediately celebrating a significant growth in sales, peel back the onion layers and check that all those orders are legitimate. That could be done by checking the card numbers or the volume of transactions – this fraud is often committed using bots. If you see a spike of 100 orders all coming in on one day, that's a huge red flag."

Eaton suggests that merchants send emails to customers as a way to gauge whether transactions are genuine. If these messages bounce back undelivered, that's another telling indicator that all is not right.

Sheikrojan notes that IP addresses can also provide potential clues about where orders are coming from.

"Fraudsters can easily change card details and other variables, such as shipping addresses, but they can leave traces behind by using the same or similar IP information or device fingerprints," he says. "Companies should be extra cautious if they spot that a user is attempting to hide the true IP address."

More intelligence-sharing among merchants could also help them to defend themselves more effectively as a collective, Reitblat adds.

"Businesses don't often want to discuss fraud, because they are ashamed about falling victim to it," he says. "But the only way to stop it and really reverse the advantage that fraudsters have is to talk to each other and collaborate."

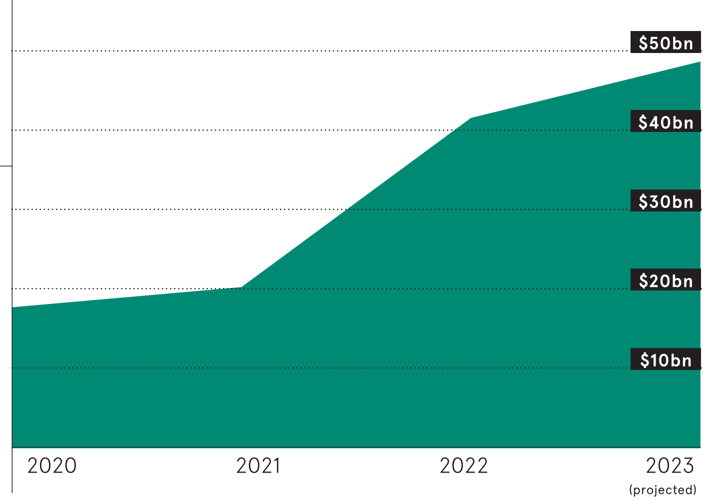
Shoppers also have a role to play in crime prevention. If an offer on an ecommerce site seems too good to be true, there's a distinct possibility that a fraudster is lurking on the other side of that deal. This form of fraud might not directly affect the original customer, who could well receive their bargain purchase and not have their details stolen, but it's far from a victimless crime and, ultimately, everyone loses out to it. ●

> **Instead of immediately celebrating a significant growth in sales, peel back the onion layers and check that all those orders are legitimate**

ONLINE SHOPPERS ARE LOSING MORE AND MORE TO FRAUD

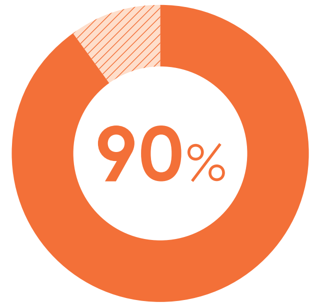
Combined global value of ecommerce payment fraud losses

Juniper Research, 2022

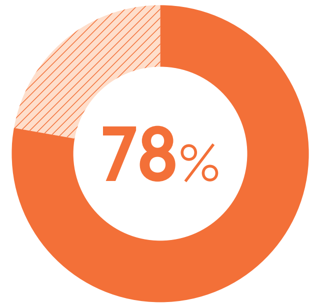


Commercial feature





of consumers say that delivery cost is important when selecting an online store



of consumers say that speed of delivery is important when selecting an online store

Sendcloud, 2022

Competitive convenience: offer shipping that keeps customers shopping

What do online retailers need to offer to stay competitively convenient and keep customers coming back?

In a world of complex algorithms, measuring the success of your ecommerce strategy by how far a customer has to walk in their slippers feels slightly out of step.

But so-called `slipper distance' is one of several strategies retailers are using to meet growing customer expectations around online purchases and returns. "Convenience is king for online customers," says Toby Hay, managing director of ecommerce marketing at logistics giant FedEx. But that can mean different things to different people.

Hay explains that, while UK consumers mostly prefer home deliveries, customers in the Nordics favour delivery to out-of-home pick-up points such as stores or lockers. "That preference is evolving now in the UK as out-of-home availability and acceptance have increased recently. Soon there will be a tipping point when it becomes convenient, cost-effective and sustainable enough for Brits to prefer using it. That's your slipper distance – when you can almost stumble out of your house and find a delivery or collection point."

This out-of-home strategy has become a key lever in delivery options used by retailers to keep pace with the explosion in ecommerce demand. Next-day delivery was once a competitive benefit but now it's expected as a standard option by customers. Click-and-collect services in-store were also once a rarity but are now much more common.

"With the bar continually rising, it is no surprise that customers today expect multiple delivery options," says Hay. "The pandemic has further heightened and changed these expectations because of the different ways we now live and shop. During Covid, most of us were at home, making deliveries a lot easier. But people's patterns and preferences are now more diverse. We may be at home or in the office or in between the two. So, the customer definition of delivery convenience, when and where they want their parcels to arrive, has become very personal and situational."

While consumers start to demand delivery at any time, almost around the clock, they also expect control and visibility of their deliveries too. Over the Covid years, customers have also become much savvier when it comes to digital purchases, from booking holidays online to buying groceries or even cars.

"Retailers have always competed on customer experience and convenience. In ecommerce, they need to be in line with their rivals' offers around speed, cost and delivery notifications to help customers plan and prepare," Hay explains. He points to 2021 research from Sendcloud, which found that for 90% of consumers, delivery is an important factor when choosing one online store over another. Meanwhile, 78% of consumers feel that speed of delivery is important.

"But customers are not just judging their experience against other retailers anymore. They want the best digital experience full stop. You are now also competing against the convenience being offered by the pizza guy delivering in 20 minutes and letting you track their progress in real time."

To win this battle of `competitive convenience', Hay says retailers are thinking like a customer and starting to customise experiences at scale. "Given that convenience is such a key factor for many people in purchasing decisions, failing to provide a tailored service can lose business," he states. "Communicating more regularly with customers about their delivery needs is critical, as is working out what their preferences are because these can change at the drop of a hat. The one-size-fits-all delivery model does not work anymore."

> **"The one-size-fits-all delivery model does not work anymore**

FedEx has a system called FedEx Delivery Manager to help both retailers and customers take ownership of the delivery. Customers can change the delivery date, get it sent to a different address, or get it delivered to a neighbour, a retailer or a nearby FedEx location – and receive an estimated delivery time window along the way.

Retailers can also be more proactive and predict customer behaviour through the use of data. "Delivery companies typically have good data on what shoppers prefer when it comes to deliveries or collections, and retailers have good data on which products are selling well or need to be delivered quickly," Hay says. "Data is the fuel of the 21st century. You can determine whether a customer has a preference for a particular delivery day or delivery point. We are moving towards mass personalisation using data to know that a customer is always at home on a Tuesday but likes to go for a coffee at 3pm for an hour. We can then predict when and where they want their deliveries to be made."

Hay says that thinking like a customer also means developing more knowledge about the competition. "One of the best things a retailer can do is act like a customer and shop with a competitor. Compare that experience with your own and learn from the good and the bad," he says.

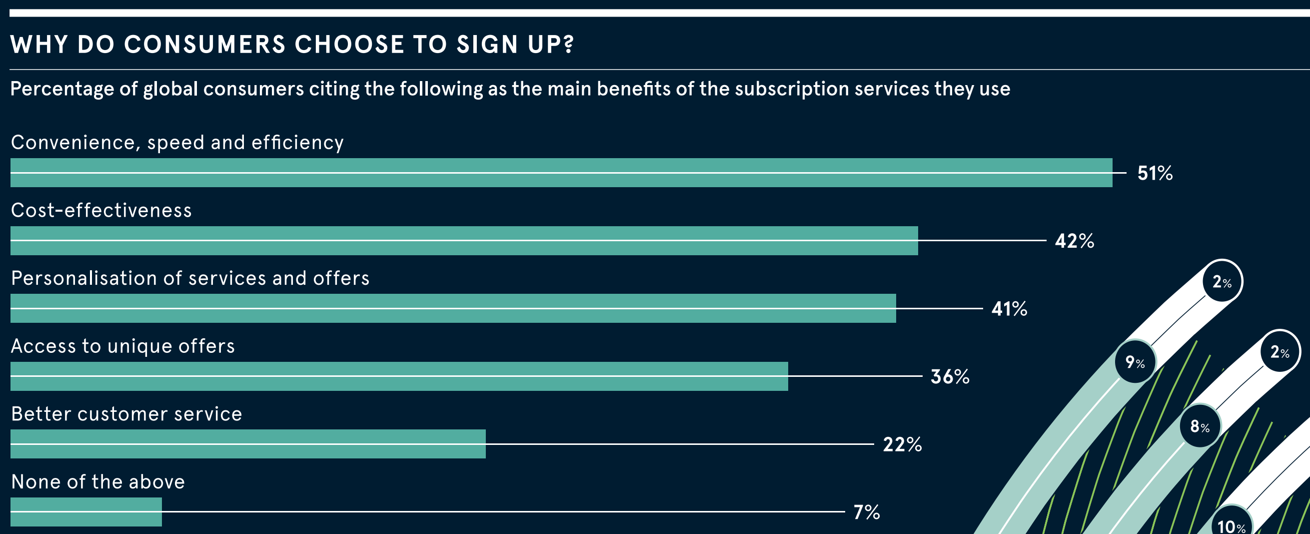
By being smarter around deliveries, retailers can also better prepare themselves for economic downturns. "During Covid, when a lot of people had more disposable income and ecommerce was growing, it was easy to hide poor performance," Hay says, "Every online retailer was a winner to a larger or lesser degree. But in times of economic crisis, the competition for customer spend increases. The more you can drive convenience for the consumer the more competitive you will be."

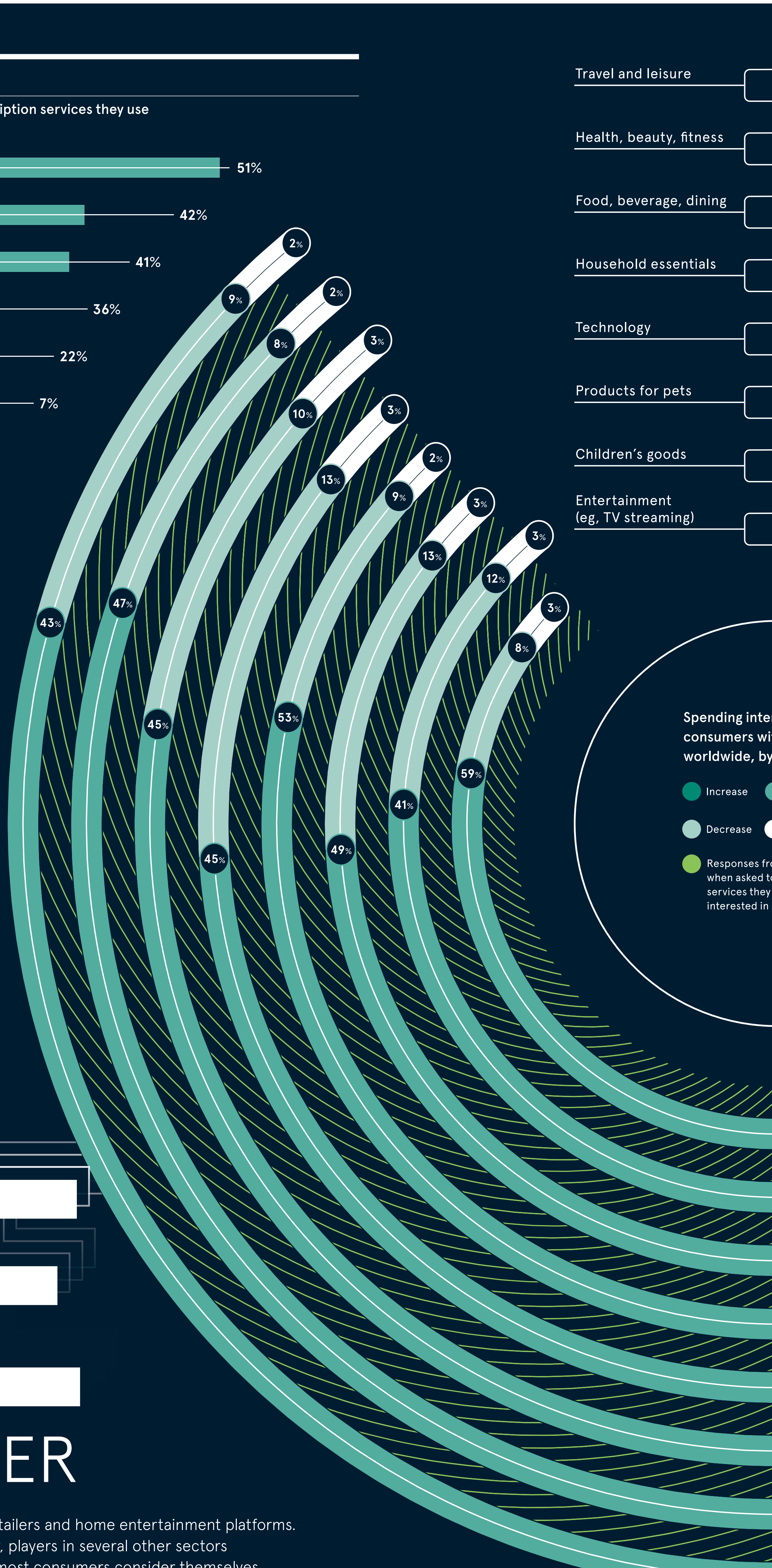
Convenience, however, is also associated with a negative environmental impact. Retailers must be both convenient and responsible, but there are challenges. "Almost 80% of customers say they would consider a sustainable delivery option but only 7% are willing to pay for it," Hay explains. "But the good news is that by using more parcel points and lockers, we all take a step towards more sustainable operations." This is a win-win solution for retailers and customers, making deliveries more sustainable and convenient.

FedEx has also been trialling the use of e-cargo delivery bikes in locations such as Copenhagen and Glasgow. "We've found that in denser urban environments you can be enormously cost-efficient on a bike. For final mile journeys you can take five vans off the road and replace them with three cargo bikes," Hay says. As well as being a good option for customers showing a preference for more sustainable delivery options, receiving packages by bike can be faster due to fewer stops and no hold up in traffic or difficulties parking. It's all about understanding the customer and providing the right service, says Hay. "We offer shipping to keep people shopping."

To find out more, visit fedex.com/en-gb/shipping/rates/ficp-rates.html

FedEx Express





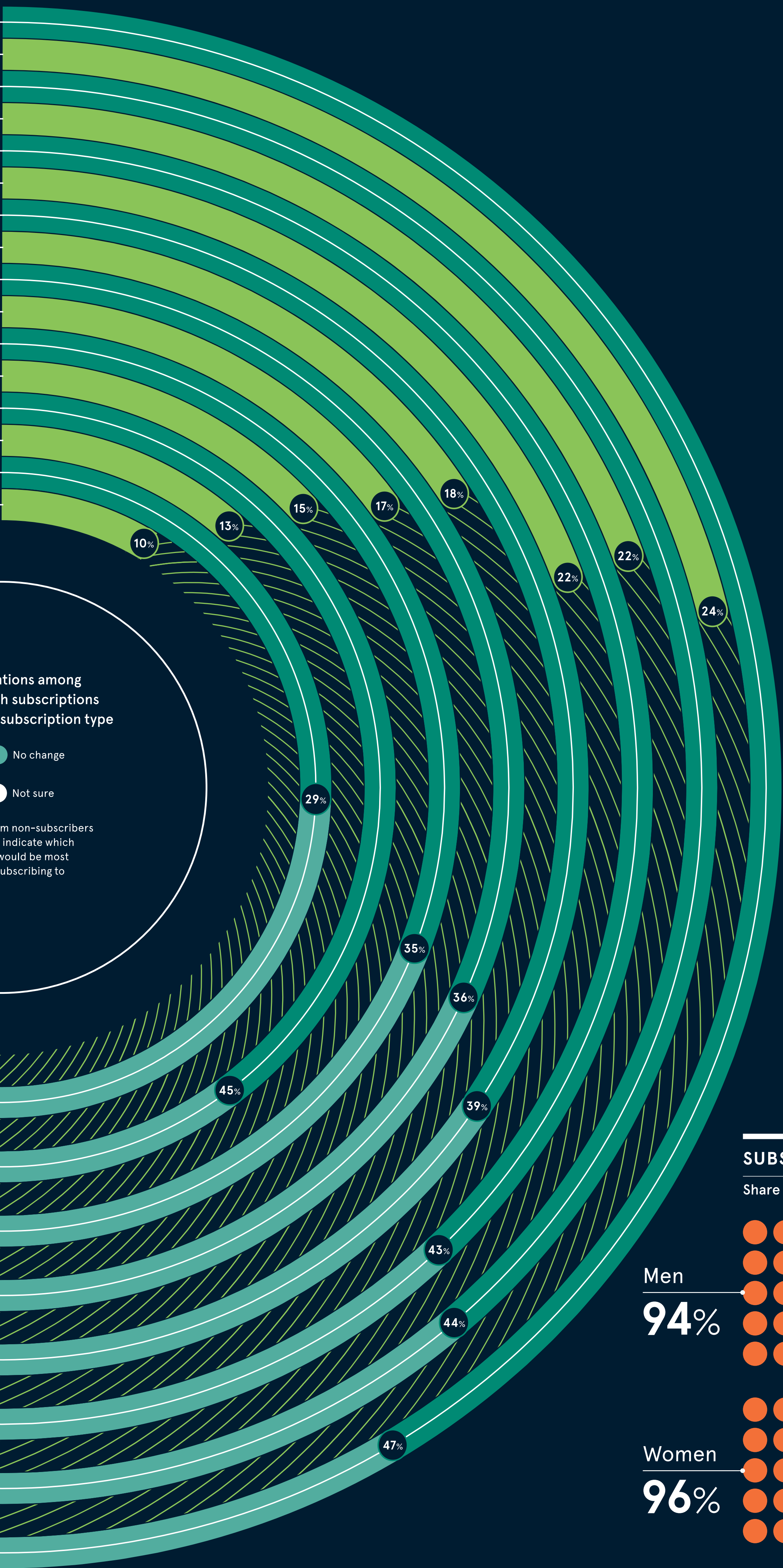
95% of shoppers have at least one subscription for a product or service

90% of those subscribers have maintained or increased their spending on subscription services in the past 12 months

84% of shoppers expect to maintain or increase their subscription spending over the next 12 months

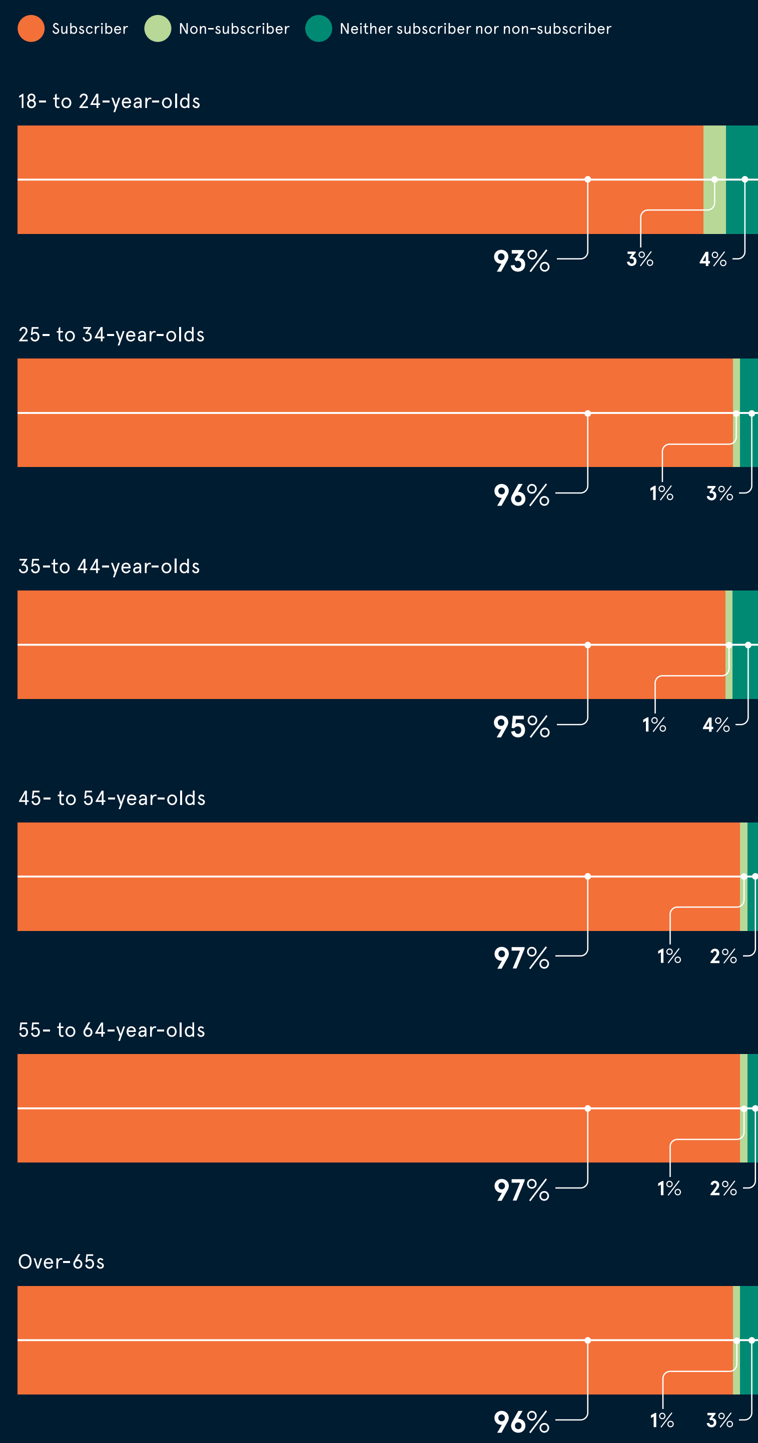
RISE OF THE SUBSCRIBER

For some time, the subscription service has been a popular model for food retailers and home entertainment platforms. But, since the Covid crisis and the consequent upsurge in ecommerce activity, players in several other sectors have been experimenting with subscriptions. This is not surprising, given that most consumers consider themselves 'subscribers' in some form – and that their spending on subscriptions remains strong despite the cost-of-living crisis



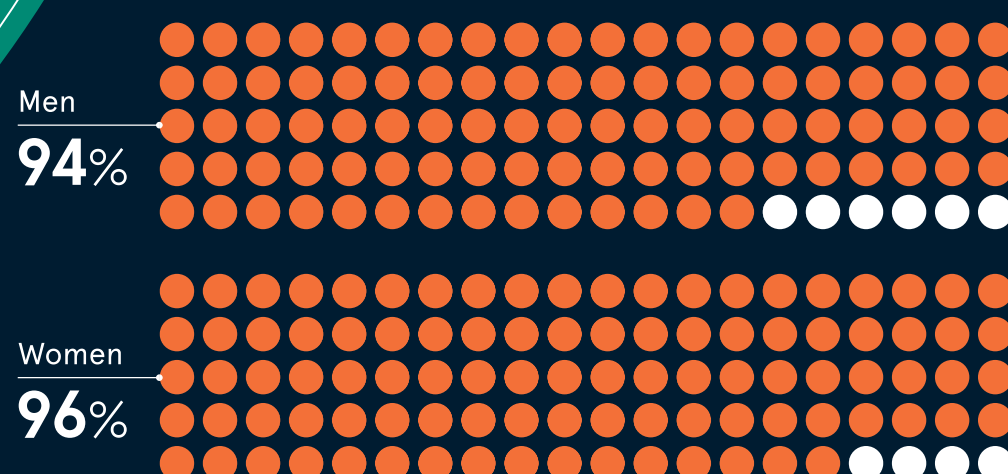
SUBSCRIPTION SERVICES ARE POPULAR WITH ALL AGES

Subscription service behaviour worldwide, by age group



SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE EQUALLY POPULAR FOR WOMEN AND MEN

Share of consumers globally who consider themselves 'subscribers' to services or products



eDreams Odigeo, OnePoll, 2022

SUSTAINABILITY

Why fashion's three Rs are a difficult sell

Reuse, repair and recycle schemes can help to reduce the rag trade's massive carbon footprint, but greenwash-wary consumers need to be convinced that such initiatives aren't a passing fad



svetikd via istock

Emily Seares

In 2022, there were nearly 53 million Google searches and social media conversations focusing on sustainability in fashion – a trend that has been growing over the past five years, according to research by Brandwatch. This increasing consumer interest has prompted retailers to create new categories such as resale as a service, enhanced by advances in tech such as artificial intelligence. The trend has also fuelled the growth of both repair schemes and recycling programmes, which convert waste into reusable material.

Some players have developed their own resale marketplaces. They include ethical pioneer Patagonia and even fast-fashion giant Zara, which offers resale in addition to repair services. Others are partnering with online consignment and thrift stores such as ThredUp or selling through marketplaces including Poshmark Vestiaire and Collective. Meanwhile, social ecommerce platforms Depop and Vinted have emerged to offer their target audience – fashion- and eco-conscious digital natives – an easy way to trade in second-hand garments.

Uniqlo is converting parts of its key city-centre stores to Re-Uniqlo Studios, offering accessible repairs and recycling. And Selfridges has set out ambitious plans for half of all sales to be sustainable by 2030. To this end, it has already increased sales of pre-loved items by 240%, administered 28,000 repairs and rented out 2,000 pieces via its Reselfridges initiative.

Despite such notable initiatives, the public generally remains sceptical of reuse, repair and recycle programmes. Commendable though these are, solving fashion's huge sustainability problem will require far more concerted action globally.

One organisation that understands the scale of the industry's challenge is the Waste & Resources Action Programme (Wrap), a charity promoting the circular economy with an initiative called Textiles 2030. Wrap's latest *Textiles 2030 Annual Progress Report* states that the number of improvement actions taken by companies in the sector to reduce their carbon and water footprints increased between 2019 and 2021. Yet this was not enough to counteract the significant growth in the volume of clothes and home textiles on sale.

With several companies overstating their eco-credentials, high-profile incidents of greenwashing have not helped to reduce consumers' understandable mistrust in the industry. That's the view of Jane Shepherdson, an expert in sustainable fashion and chair of My Wardrobe HQ, a luxury rental platform. She believes that several high-street and fast-fashion retailers are using reuse, repair and recycle schemes simply "to make themselves look more responsible. Consumers totally see through that. We have seen way too much greenwashing from some of these guys, who are obviously just trying to increase footfall. The consumer is not stupid and deserves the respect of these brands."

Shepherdson adds: "For a brand to successfully offer reuse, repair and recycle programmes, it needs either some proven credentials or a product that is so well made and in demand that it makes sense."

Established names in the luxury segment, with their heritage and focus on quality that can stand the test of time, are most likely to meet both criteria. Given that high-end garments are better made and more durable than most, they are less likely to end up in landfill.

Hanushka Toni is the founder and CEO of Sellier, a platform specialising in the resale of luxury goods. She observes that the aftercare schemes offered by high-end brands are "often a chief driver of purchasing decisions. Consumers who invest in luxury goods are more inclined to repair and reuse them, rather than discard them, because they view such products as valuable and worth preserving."

Nevertheless, the continuing popularity of fast fashion and its disposable ethos represents a massive stumbling block.

> **We have seen way too much greenwashing from some of these guys, who are obviously just trying to increase footfall. The consumer is not stupid**

"Ultimately, fashion is about consumption. We don't have infinite natural resources to meet the demands of the world's growing population," points out Lydia Brealey, founder of sustainability consultancy Enkel and a former high-street fashion buyer. "Sustainability is about protecting resources for future generations, so no brand can justifiably claim that it's being sustainable when it's still churning out products."

Zara, which puts about 2,000 new styles on the market each month, and Chinese ultra-fast-fashion giant Shein – which adds more products than that to its website on most days – have both come under scrutiny recently for establishing resale platforms. Their critics have accused such initiatives of being incongruous with their 'pile it high and sell it cheap' business models.

Other fast-fashion players have faced a backlash for their attempts to market themselves as environmentally conscious businesses. Boohoo, for instance, appointed socialite Kourtney Kardashian to the role of sustainability ambassador last September.

"Some companies might position themselves as being environmentally friendly, but there can at times be little to no evidence of their planet-positive actions," says J'Nae Phillips, insights editor at Canvas8, a specialist in analysing consumer behaviour. "People are becoming more aware of greenwashing and are increasingly calling out brands on social media."

She adds that the firms attracting most consumer scepticism tend to be those with "big, bold and brash campaigns that aren't backed up with behind-the-scenes action that aligns with their intentions".

H&M rolled out a global reuse and recycling scheme 10 years ago, partnering with Looper Textile Co to collect unwanted garments from consumers in its European markets. Despite its status as an early adopter, it accepts that there is more work to be done in this field, noting that "recycling is only the final loop, not the entire solution".

The retailer says that it needs to change how it designs its products,

to ensure that they have longer usable lives, and expand its rental offering, which is currently available in only four stores.

One of the main concerns surrounding recycling programmes is the lack of transparency surrounding what actually happens to the unwanted clothing.

"A lot of scepticism about take-back schemes and the like arises because they are often positioned as 'recycling' or 'circular solutions', which is misleading given the current landscape," says Philippa Grogan, sustainability consultant at Eco-Age. "If a collection scheme recovers poor-quality garments or unmanageable fibre blends such as polycotton, the post-consumer materials are unlikely to be recycled, repaired or resold."

It also comes down to effective communication from the brand. It should disclose why it has a take-back programme in place, the strategy for the materials collected, what proportion of recovered clothing is ultimately discarded and how the scheme fits with other sustainability initiatives the company may have in place.

H&M reveals that the main problem it faces when ramping up the use of recycled fibres for new clothing concerns the lack of recycling solutions that can work on an industrial scale. To address this, it's investing in new tech with its textile recycling partner, Renewcell.

Some of the mistrust surrounding such schemes is also linked to the public's general perceptions of the company concerned. Understandably, consumers are more sceptical about fast-fashion brands' sustainability initiatives.

The scheme operated by Marks & Spencer, on the other hand, has attracted little scrutiny, as this long-established household name still commands a lot of trust.

M&S established its so-called Plan A sustainability programme back in 2007, with the aim of becoming a net-zero business across its entire supply chain and product range by 2040. As part of this, it became the first big UK garment retailer to enter a national clothing recycling partnership. It has since added rental collaborations, reuse-and-recycle capsule collections and resale partnerships to its offering.

Carmel McQuaid, head of sustainable business at M&S, stresses that transparency is paramount if firms are to earn and maintain the trust of wary consumers.

"Through our *Family Matters Index* report, we know that more than a third of consumers consider the climate crisis when purchasing clothes," she says. "But rental, resale and repair programmes are simply not viable if they don't have quality at their core."

Another trusted high-street retailer, the John Lewis Partnership, has also been dipping its toes into the circular economy. But George Barrett, the firm's sustainability and ethics manager, acknowledges that its work here is just starting.

"Our customers and partners are pushing us to provide accessible and affordable solutions in this space," he says. "There's more that we can and will do. That includes building on our range of pre-loved and refurbished products, making rental as user-friendly as possible and providing repair services across our product ranges."

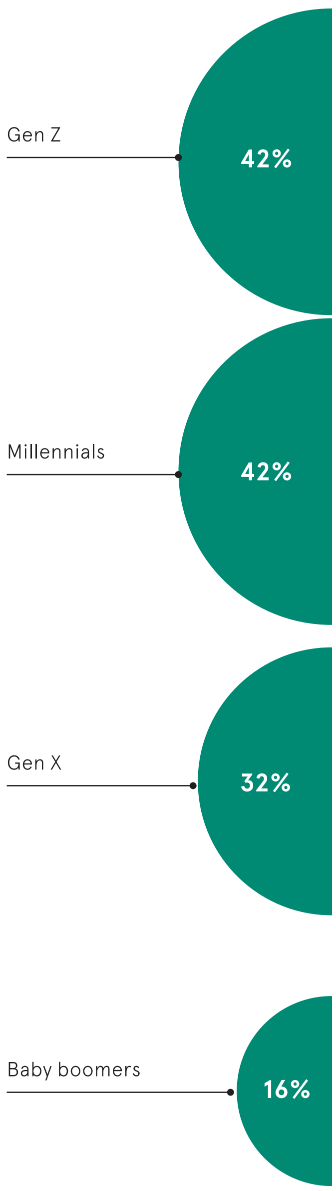
There is always the possibility that legislation will accelerate the industry's efforts. While the UK has yet to make a definitive move in this respect, France has introduced labelling laws that will oblige brands to disclose information about the environmental footprints of their products. This will include data on repairability, recyclability, recycled material content, traceability and the presence of plastics.

"This is about building a narrative with customers, developing authenticity, trust and a sustainability strategy that aligns with your brand values," Brealey says.

Given that sustainability will not be going out of fashion any time soon, brands and retailers that are establishing themselves as genuine leaders in these areas seem far better placed than the laggards and greenwashers to thrive in the medium to long term. ●

OLDER CONSUMERS ARE UNCONVINCED BY RESALE

Share of consumers willing to buy resale apparel worldwide, by generation



ThredUp, GlobalData, 2021

Commercial feature

NFTs and delivery fees: how to walk the tax compliance tightrope

Tax compliance is never an easy task for retailers. As they bump up against new markets, new models and new technology, getting it right is getting complicated



Last July, the state of Colorado introduced a retail delivery fee, levying $0.27 on every order delivered by a motor vehicle if an item included in the order is also subject to the Colorado sales tax. Earlier this year, Minnesota followed suit, enacting its own retail delivery fee.

It was a simple change but one that hinted at the vast network tax complexities that sit beneath the surface of an evolving and increasingly connected marketplace.

As consumers flock towards digital platforms to buy products and services, retailers across sectors are gaining a valuable foothold in new global markets and basking in boosted sales. But while business booms, merchants and marketplaces must get to grips with the shifting tax rules that follow - and quickly.

"What Minnesota and Colorado, and eventually other states and other countries around the world, are doing is implementing legislation and taxes on delivery fees because of the boom in ecommerce," says Sacha Wilson, senior director at Avalara. "Ultimately, every country will have its own new regulations, so if you want to be efficient as a retail business, you need to be on top of tax compliance from the outset," he continues.

Shoppers and retailers are adapting their practices in step with the opportunities that ecommerce provides, and regulation should remain a critical consideration. The trend towards subscription commerce is an example of this. Along with the promise of recurring revenue, these models are bound up in an entirely new set of sales tax compliance requirements, particularly for retailers that sell subscriptions overseas.

> Taxing the metaverse is still a grey area, but consultations are taking place among governments, and there is no doubt that change is coming

"If you sell digital goods, doing so via a subscription model can change those products into an ongoing digital service, which alters the tax rules surrounding them," Wilson explains. "Resolving tax issues after the event can be incredibly expensive, leaving you paying backdated taxes, and, potentially, penalties and interest as well."

Changing tax policies are an inevitable response to growing trends and technological developments. And the expanding metaverse is no exception. The sale of non-fungible tokens (NFTs), which can range from digital artwork to virtual fashion items, triggered a host of questions about the logistics of taxing in a virtual plain. Last year, Washington and Pennsylvania became the first US states to tax the sale of NFTs. Other states are likely to join the club in 2023.

Some NFT creators have begun adding physical goods as well as virtual goods and services to their NFT offerings, adding another layer of complexity to decisions around which transactions would be subject to sales and use tax and how the jurisdiction of each order is defined.

The precedents set in this new arena have ramifications beyond the NFT market. Many traditional retailers, including luxury brands, are adopting metaverse technology to boost sales, using augmented reality (AR) to allow customers to try on luxury fashion items virtually.

Even Cartier has joined the metaverse, creating a virtual timeline of its prestigious Tank watch, from its 1917 launch to the present-day Tank Française, which people can 'try on' via Snapchat-powered AR.

"Taxing the metaverse is still a grey area, but consultations are taking place among governments, and there is no doubt that change is coming," says Wilson. "As retailers incorporate more of these new world technologies in their sales strategies, it is something they need to be aware of."

The global trend toward more vigorous tax enforcement has increased the need to focus on mitigating compliance risks. Wilson points to the value of automated tools and tax solutions, including those offered by Avalara, that prevent additional tax compliance, duties, and cross-border tariffs from becoming barriers to global business growth.

"Successful businesses are constantly testing the market, and there are so many new channels and technologies to experiment with," he says. "The metaverse is new, and it's growing in popularity. Brands are using 3D gaming platforms to engage with customers. But they need to be anticipating changes in tax rates, rules and complexity. It's about being prepared."

For more information visit avalara.com/eu

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Klaus Vedfelt via Getty Images

SOCIAL MEDIA

Insta karma – the rise of de-influencer marketing

The backlash against glib influencer marketing and the conspicuous consumption it promotes is well under way. How can brands and retailers ensure that they don't get targeted for criticism?

Amy Nguyen

The so-called de-influencing trend is making corporate marketing teams around the world sit up and listen. It happens when people take to social media and urge their followers not to buy certain goods. They may be doing so to promote cheaper, more sustainable alternatives to the products in question, highlight unethical practices by the brand making them or call out misleading advertising by another influencer. The practice, occurring mostly on Instagram, TikTok and YouTube, is gaining significant traction.

Mentions of de-influencing on these networks increased by more than 3,000% between 1 January and 10 March, according to research conducted by social analytics platform Brandwatch. Common associated hashtags include #whatnottobuy, #overconsumption and #antihaul.

The internet has democratised access to information (and misinformation) about brands and products. Its spread on social media is beyond the control of companies, so it can be a problem for them.

Traditionally, the big beasts of the creator economy have wielded their influence on their millions of followers to help companies market their wares. The growing popularity of channels with algorithms that favour short video content has proved useful for the success of in-app shopping features. More than a quarter of social media users have bought a product based on an influencer's recommendation online, according to research by Kantar.

But you don't need to have millions of followers to be influential. Micro-influencers – defined as those with between 1,000 and 100,000 followers – have become increasingly valuable to brands. Research by YPulse has found that 58% of millennial and gen-Z consumers don't consider the size of an influencer's following as a factor in their trustworthiness. (The level of engagement that micro-influencers can command does seem to be platform-dependent – their engagement rates on TikTok stood at 17.9% last year, versus 3.9% on Instagram and only 1.6% on YouTube, according to Influencer Marketing Hub.)

Content posted by 'ordinary' shoppers can also be hugely influential. Research by consumer experience platform Nosto indicates that 79% of viewers find that such material has a strong effect on their purchasing decisions, whereas only 9% cite content published by influencers as impactful.

Faced with the de-influencing trend, how should brands and retailers change their approach to influencer marketing and social media engagement generally?

Melanie Kentish is managing partner of Dentsu Creative UK's talent and influencer division, Gleam Futures. She believes that "the most successful partnerships come when there are shared values between the influencer and the brand. Integrity is vital – they should authentically love your offerings."

Kentish points out that brands' campaigns tend to be most successful when they give influencers total freedom to talk honestly, even if that means they aren't totally positive about a given product.

As the cost-of-living crisis continues, such authenticity has become even more important to consumers, especially in the fashion and beauty sectors. Last year, YouGov found that 40% of UK adults had reduced or even stopped spending on clothes as inflation hit a 40-year high.

In putting the fast-fashion segment's colossal environmental cost under the spotlight, de-influencing has harmed the sales of key players such as Shein and Boohoo. But the other end of the market has not been immune to its effects, with luxury brands such as Olaplex, Dior Beauty and Kim Kardashian's Skims coming in for criticism questioning the value for money they provide.

"As a brand, you can't control the narrative – nor should you want to," stresses a spokesperson for cosmetics retailer Lush. "For us, it's all about listening to what our community is saying."

Kentish agrees that companies should treat critical reviews as valuable information. "Take on board any feedback about your branding, price or product," she says, advising firms to open direct lines of communication with consumers offering constructive criticism.

In extreme cases such as the 'cancellation' of a product online, a company's sales, product and social media teams must work together quickly to formulate a response. That's the advice of Imogen Coles, UK influence lead at advertising giant Ogilvy.

"Reactions to de-influencing at any level should always be an integrated effort. It's the reason that our corporate teams sit alongside our consumer and influence departments," she says.

As a trend, de-influencing may actually be beneficial for many brands, especially when it's promoting responsible consumption. A sentiment analysis by Brandwatch

> **As a brand, you can't control the narrative – nor should you want to. For us, it's all about listening to what our community is saying**

has found that 22% of online conversations about de-influencing indicated consumers' happiness at being given the chance to become more informed and sustainable with their purchasing decisions.

Using the clout of influencers to encourage people to adopt more sustainable lifestyles is important, says Besma Whayeb, director of Ethical Influencers, a community of more than 1,200 influencers in 65 countries. She also keeps a blog called Curiously Conscious, which covers "sustainable fashion, clean beauty, low-impact lifestyle and more".

Whayeb, who has gained 26,000 social media followers since 2014, argues that an influencer has "a huge responsibility to their audience and, wider than that, to people and the planet". On fashion specifically, Besma believes it's crucial to scrutinise brands' employment practices and the ecological effects of their production processes.

"To constantly push buying new clothes, especially during the cost-of-living crisis, is inauthentic," she says. "I like to focus on circularity, interspersing content with reviews focusing on a brand's supply chain."

In 2021, Lush made the bold decision to step away from Instagram, and TikTok (it remains active on YouTube). A spokesperson explains: "We don't want customers to have to come to meet us in an unsafe place, but we still work with influencers and have gotten creative in how we approach that."

Today, the company prioritises in-person events and online communication formats such as podcasts over traditional influencer marketing on social media. It has also established a presence in the virtual world of Decentraland.

> **To constantly push buying new clothes, especially during the cost-of-living crisis, is inauthentic**

Lush's research into digital engagement with The Future Laboratory has found that 70% of adults in the UK, the US and Japan think that a brand should leave a social network if it considers that platform to be unethical. Moreover, 62% respect brands that care more about a social network's ethics than the number of people they can reach on it.

Brands and retailers need to focus on authenticity and value alignment if they are to remain attuned to their customers' needs and stay flexible in their approach to influencer partnerships and social media marketing in general.

Developing a customer-centric feedback process that engages their audiences will prove valuable. Messaging focused on the responsible production and consumption of products can also help instil trust and attract eco-conscious consumers. Most crucially, companies can navigate the complexities of influencing – and, indeed, de-influencing – by remembering that social networks offer a space for communities, constructive conversations and powerful calls for collective change.

SOCIAL SHOPPERS DON'T EXACTLY LOVE THE DE-INFLUENCERS

Responses of consumers using social media for shopping purposes when asked to name their overriding sentiment about the de-influencing movement



Brandwatch, 2023

Commercial feature

Today's customers set tomorrow's trends. Are retailers listening?

Innovations in ecommerce and retail might capture the collective imagination, but cutting-edge trends can cut both ways if customer insights are overlooked

Every day we're bombarded with messages about the future. Will AI make us obsolete? Is the high street dead?

With new possibilities for personalisation, advancements in AI, and an ever-expanding metaverse to play with, retailers can often become consumed with determining which trends will take off.

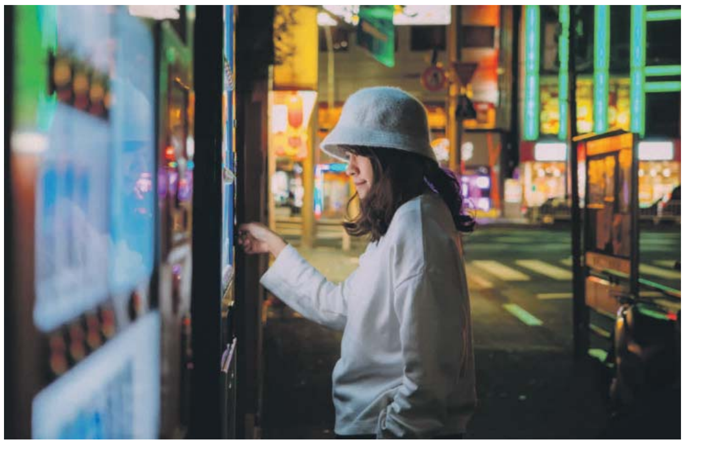
But while future gazing has its merits, customer data and insights sit at the heart of all future developments. Or at least they should. Not taking time to understand your customers could make placing a bet on which trends will come to fruition a doomed lottery. So why do retailers chase trends rather than data?

"Many retailers are desperate to find applications for trendy technologies often through fear of missing out," says Rachel Smith, director at ecommerce consultancy Wunderman Thompson Commerce & Technology. "But it's not always clear what problems these technologies solve for customers and how best to apply them," she continues.

Companies could waste millions and lose customers by following trends without first asking two very important questions: what do my customers want now, and how will this impact the future?

Smith believes that building up crucial customer insights now is the best route to identifying the most pertinent trends for the future. Brands and retailers don't just need to understand what is possible using AI or the metaverse but need to ask themselves whether these trends are truly in step with consumer demand today and tomorrow.

> **Many retailers are desperate to find applications for trendy technologies. But it's not always clear what problems these technologies solve for customers**



Although this might seem like the sensible approach, according to research from Wunderman Thompson, most buyers (52%) don't believe retailers understand the customer journey. And the ramifications can be huge, with 58% saying they wouldn't shop online with a retailer that failed to meet their expectations.

Bringing customers' cross-channel experiences to life can be perceived as a challenge. But Smith argues that one of the simplest and most effective tools for illustrating what customers endure is a customer journey or experience map.

This map provides a visual representation of the customer's end-to-end experience over time and draws together quantitative and qualitative insights. "They're great for identifying frictions and opportunities and aligning organisations around a common goal, especially when the responsibilities span multiple functions in siloed organisations," she explains.

While web metrics like cost per click and average order value (AOV) remain valid, taking a broader look at customer experience can deliver even deeper insights. "We need a complete shift away from understanding sales from a siloed business perspective to understanding the entire customer journey from the consumer's perspective and how this can and will affect business performance," says Smith.

Regular qualitative research can be a critical competitive differentiator. "These insights can help you understand customer missions, mindsets, and the 'why' behind certain behaviours, like why people drop out of the process at a particular point, what elements of the product description worked and didn't work, or why they favour your competitor," she explains.

Investing time and effort in understanding this is money well spent. And most importantly, organisations that implement change based on these insights often see an increase in key growth metrics of conversion, AOV, revenue and retention.

But it shouldn't be a one-and-done. "If your customer research was done pre-Covid, it's of limited value because the world has changed so much," says Smith. "Even if it was done six months ago, it won't reflect the changes we're seeing because of the cost-of-living crisis." This means that your future gazing could be built on insights that are no longer relevant.

A retail reality check is in order. Before implementing AI, building stores in the metaverse, or even creating a space-commerce strategy, businesses should ask their customers what they actually want and need.

Smith concludes: "None of us can say for certain which future trends will become the new normal in retail and ecommerce," she says. "But if you understand your customers, you're better prepared and have probably already started planning for whatever may come next."

For more information visit wtcom.co/wtc-cx

WUNDERMAN THOMPSON Commerce & Technology

INSIGHT

‘It’s about understanding the customer journey from start to finish’

Graeme Howe, director of the eCommerce Expo, explains why retailers have to remain nimble as their costs keep rising and consumers cut back

The past year has been one of the most challenging for UK ecommerce businesses in recent memory. Putin’s war in Ukraine has pushed up operating costs and made consumers cut their spending. A recession looms, albeit a shallower one than previously feared, but things are likely to get worse before they get better.

Yet innovations in etail tech continue apace and the UK’s online shopping market remains one of the most dynamic in the world. So what trends can retailers expect to see over the next 18 months and how should they prepare for these?

One of the biggest challenges will be providing the best customer experience. Never has understanding customers been more important to help retailers personalise their offerings. Yet new rules on the collection of third-party data have made the job harder while pushing up the cost of acquiring customers.

It’s forcing etailers to find alternative solutions, including the greater use of first-party data. Encouragingly, there will be many new opportunities to gather such material in 2023-24 as consumers return to the high street and retailers develop multichannel platforms.

Bricks-and-mortar shops will become increasingly important as they are repurposed into experiential spaces that showcase a retailer’s products and its brand, rather than simply shifting units. Consumers are also likely to do more of their shopping on social media, which will open up new data touchpoints.

“A single-customer view is becoming more important,” says Graeme Howe, director of eCommerce Expo, the UK’s largest ecommerce event, which will take place at the ExCeL London centre on 27-28 September.

“It’s about understanding the customer journey from start to finish. Did a given shopper find you on social and buy in a store? Or was it some marketing content that led them to your website? If you understand how a customer is engaging with you, it greatly enhances your ability to influence the process.”

Leading retailers have traditionally worked in silos, with digital teams having few interactions with divisions such as sales and marketing. But most are breaking down these barriers, enabling them to capitalise on the data they have. Continuing this will be vital as the economic outlook darkens.

While customer experience may take centre stage in 2023-24, retailers can’t ignore other trends likely to shape ecommerce over the coming years. For example, there is growing emphasis on brand credentials, including customer reviews. Sustainability remains high on the agenda too as firms work to meet the UN’s climate goals. Online fashion companies have been forced to rethink their production processes, for example, and we’ve seen growth in second-hand and rental markets.

New tech will continue to shape the landscape, especially AI, augmented reality and the metaverse. But Howe warns brands not to chase every shiny new innovation before getting the basics right.

“Take mobile, which accounts for 70% of UK retail transactions,” he says. “Retailers must refine their apps and make payment processes frictionless. You also have the problem of online returns, which are becoming hugely expensive. Expect to see more returns policies being tightened over the coming months.”

These topics and more will be discussed at the expo. It will enable attendees to experience the latest in ecommerce technology and hear visionary speakers discussing the issues of the day.

“In challenging times, it’s vital to share best practice,” Howe says. “With more than 300 exhibitors and two days of seminars, this expo will be focused on preparing the industry for a potentially bumpy – but exciting – period of change.” ●

Visit ecommerceexpo.co.uk to register your interest in attending the event, which is free to retailers and brands



Graeme Howe
Director, eCommerce Expo

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

No hiding place for poor service

Far from its origins in personal store visits, undercover shopping is using remote video and audio recordings to reveal problems that could be harming the shopping experience for online customers



Virginia Matthews

There was a time when impoverished students across the UK knew that posing as a customer in a shop or restaurant to record the warmth of the welcome or the quality of the quail was a quick way to earn some cash.

As retail moves online, mystery-shopper projects involving digital experiences, such as web chats and online journey surveillance, are helping retailers to address their most complex customer-service challenges. What were once paper-based reports with undercover insights have been supplanted by end-to-end mystery-shopping software that provides objective, up-to-the-minute assessments. Retailers gain insights into overall service standards, real examples of both good and bad practice and even recommendations to boost sales and enhance their digital presence.

Teams of mystery shoppers impersonate customers to buy online, make complaints and engage with brands via social media. They test as much of the customer journey as possible, from web page navigation and email enquiries to fulfilment times and the returns process.

“Physical mystery shopping was about auditing the use of in-store merchandising or the sincerity of the sales assistant’s smile. But today’s initiatives take a multichannel approach across the entire shopping experience,” says Dave Pattman, MD, customer experience practice, at Gobeyond Partners. “Rating an online sale is reasonably straightforward. But tracking what happens after the purchase, particularly if a shopper wants to return an item or make a complaint, offers real insights into how your business succeeds or fails in turning a new customer into a lifelong advocate for the brand.”

Poor-performing employees were once able to challenge the findings of face-to-face mystery shoppers, but digital programmes have made mystery-shopping insights more objective. The widespread use of covert video and audio – which can include recordings of employees working remotely – leaves impolite or ill-informed team members with nowhere to hide.

Emma Carmody is the owner and managing director of Xperior, a social media monitoring company that helps companies to improve their customer service. She points to the fact that retailers subject to certain regulatory standards are obliged to monitor employees’ performance. As an example, she says that it would have been “unthinkable” to buy a car through a click-and-collect service 10 years ago, but this has become routine ever since the Covid lockdowns.

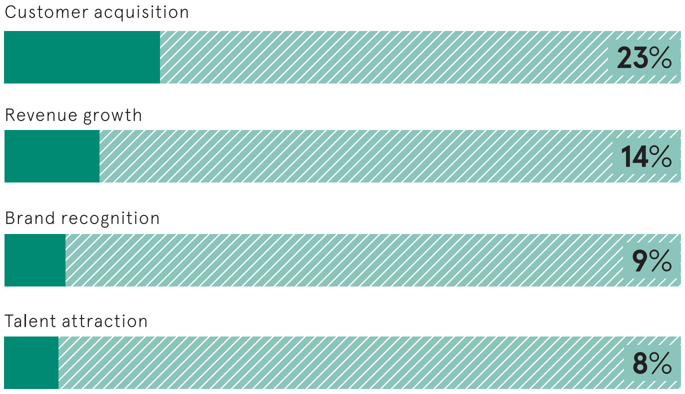
“With negotiations often conducted online or over the telephone, car dealerships are using covert audio and video recording to ensure that salespeople aren’t cutting corners on matters such as affordability simply because the customer isn’t physically present,” Carmody says.

Staff agree to ad-hoc surveillance before signing their employment contracts. Evidence of any bad service can be invaluable in identifying gaps in training. The use of mystery shoppers is often highly unpopular among employees, but Carmody believes that offering rewards for good service is more effective than shaming poor performers.

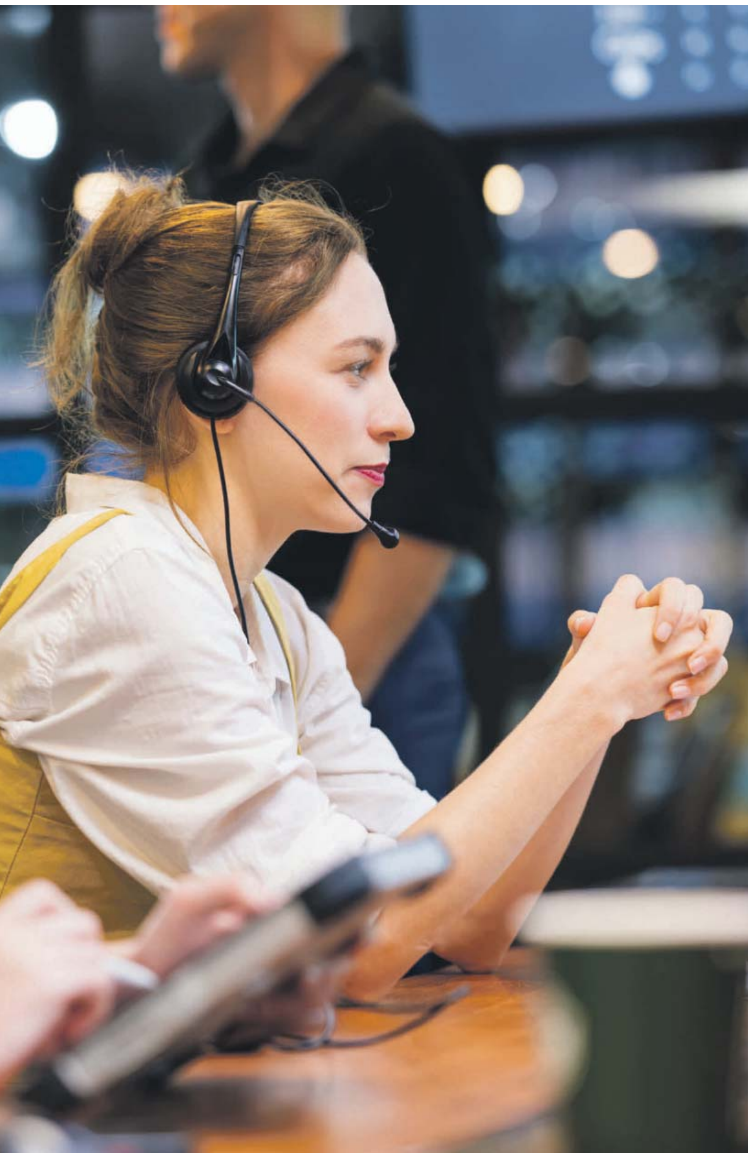
While in-house training is the primary focus for many mystery-

RETAILERS ARE USING NUMEROUS MEASURES TO GAUGE THE QUALITY OF THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE THEY OFFER

Responses of retail C-suite members in the US, UK, Canada and Australia when asked to rate the most important metrics for assessing their CX efforts



HGS, FINN Partners, 2022



UK FIRMS THAT WORK TO IMPROVE THEIR CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE COULD SEE...

75%
Better margins

89%
Customer retention rates

30%
Greater lifetime values of customers

KPMG, 2022

> “ If a customer needs to call or email you before completing an online purchase, the problem inevitably lies with the website, not the shopper

shopping projects, they can provide insights that might explain why a retailer’s sales processes may not always go to plan. The quality of the firm’s website may need attention, rather than the professionalism of its staff, for instance.

“When it comes to muddled or inadequate information on websites, I still hear clients complaining that customers are behaving illogically or ‘aren’t doing it right’,” Pattman says. “But, if a customer needs to call or email you before completing an online purchase – which reduces your profit per sale – we find that the problem inevitably lies with the website, not the shopper.”

Whether it’s a sketchy FAQs section or lack of transparency around delivery times, mystery-shopping programmes highlight why customers “don’t always behave as marketers would like them to” and can also offer practical solutions.

A typical provider of mystery-shopping services will charge about £19 for a phone call and £99 for a video recording. For large retailers, these projects might track 40,000 online purchases and 2,000 telephone interactions.

But, while mystery-shopping programmes aren’t necessarily cheap, the usual alternative is free customer reviews. Given the brevity and anecdotal nature of such material, Tamsin Palmer, operations manager at Customerwise, thinks it would be a mistake to rely on it.

“Social media reviews tend to rate a business’s customer service as either fantastic or lousy. There is often very little in between,” she observes, adding that mystery shopping provides a far more nuanced assessment.

“It’s compiled by experts and it’s factual, detailed and impartial,” Palmer says. “Its recommendations are more pertinent than a hasty review by a customer, which might have been fired off in a fit of enthusiasm or pique.”

There’s no doubt that customer reviews can draw attention to a business – for good or ill. But to drive improvements in customer service or employee behaviour, a one-star or five-star rating can leave firms craving more details.

“Customers who leave online reviews won’t necessarily tell you that they called to make a sales enquiry but no one bothered to call them back,” observes Janet Wood, founder and director of The Silent Customer. “And those reviews won’t inform you that a customer would have signed up to your social media platforms if these had been made available to them. Mystery shopping does all of that and more. And it can uncover missed revenue opportunities and motivate change in the workforce too.”

Some projects focus on key demographic groups on the full website journey, from finding the website to completing a transaction.

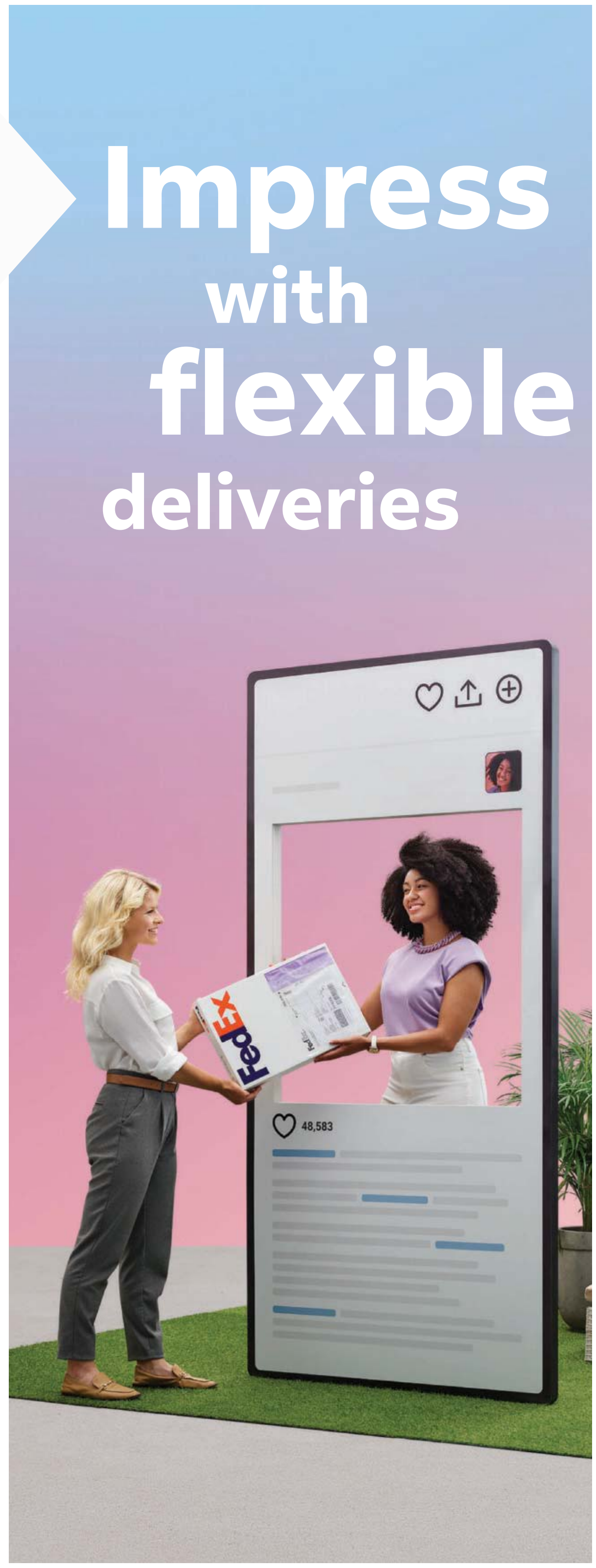
In most cases, though, undercover shopping projects will track phone interactions – still a favoured method for shoppers who want to register a complaint – and social media channels. But packages are based on the needs of the organisation and many will also audit email communications and video.

Some programmes will run for as long as three years, usually when a retailer wants to benchmark long-term behavioural changes among its employees. On the other hand, one-off projects designed to highlight a single facet of CX – live chats, for instance – may run for just a few weeks.

Mystery shopping also enables retailers to benchmark their practices against those of their rivals. It is the quest for competitor intelligence that prompts many retailers to try mystery shopping. Palmer thinks she knows why.

“The explosion of retail channels is making shoppers behave in new ways. It is vital for retailers to keep up with their changing behaviour and expectations of a brand or industry,” she says.

Ultimately, if you can see how your competitors are dealing with customer queries and complaints online – and how that benefits or detracts from their overall financial performance – you might decide to modify and adjust your own protocols accordingly. ●



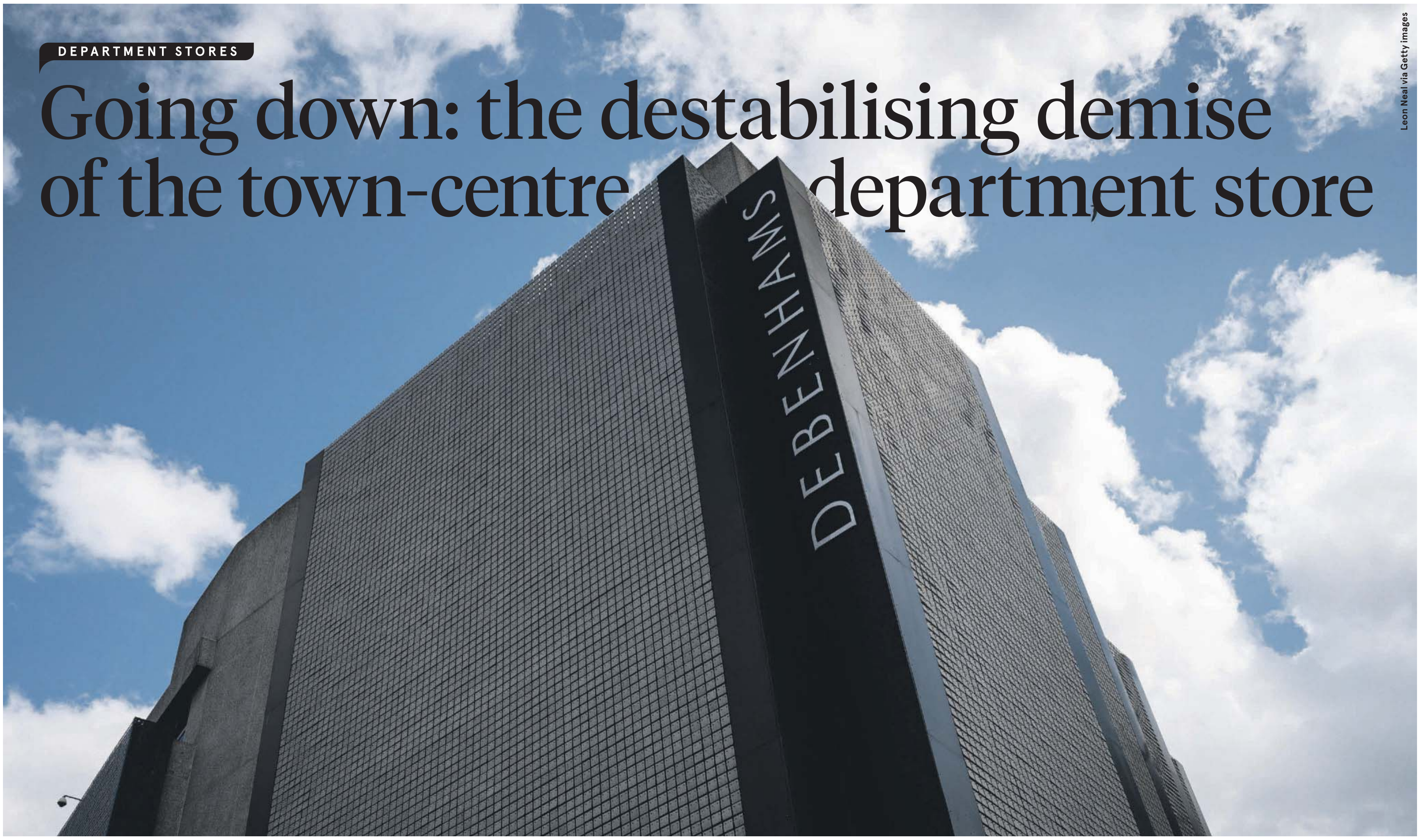
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FedEx Express

DEPARTMENT STORES

Going down: the destabilising demise of the town-centre department store



Leon Neal via Getty images

The loss of a grand emporium from the high street often has a grievous domino effect on a town's retail economy. Is the ailing regional department store sector beyond redemption?

Ouida Taaffe

A simple walk through the town centre of any large UK town will show that times are tough for department stores. Many stand shuttered and empty. The volume of sales at department stores fell by 11% between January 2020 and January 2023, according to the Office for National Statistics, but the rot had started long before the Covid crisis.

Debenhams, which was once the largest department store chain in the UK, closed its last high-street shops in May 2021. The same month also accounted for Jenners – 'the Harrods of the North' – in Edinburgh, along with other shops in the Frasers Group. Even John Lewis, long the beacon of value-conscious middle-class aspiration, has been forced to contemplate selling a minority stake in the business, which would put an end to its much-admired 100% employee-owned structure.

But why should anyone care about department stores? By definition, they sell almost everything under one roof – from haberdashery and kitchenware to millinery and soft furnishings – but online shops and specialist stores will often offer a greater selection at a lower price.

One reason to care is that they matter to the streetscape. Many stores maintained grand premises (Jenners occupied a grade-A listed building on Princes Street) and put on lavish seasonal displays that people travelled into towns to admire. When such stores stand empty and boarded up, they can make high streets look sad, shabby and uninviting. But that's not all.

"The closure of a department store in a regional town is, first, and most obviously, a blow that knocks out the two front teeth of a high street, leaving a gaping hole that few other retailers are brave enough to fill."

So says Peter Cross, an independent retail consultant and a former customer experience director at John Lewis and Waitrose. He adds that department stores were the destination shops that people would always visit when going into town. When these are gone, high streets lose an important focal point for shoppers. That makes life harder for other businesses and, ultimately, the town, which needs retail rates to help balance the books.

The government considered introducing an online sales tax to close the rates gap, but concluded in 2022 that it would be "complex, distortive and would not raise sufficient revenue to fund the scale of business rate relief stakeholders have called for". Instead, there will be a "generous" revaluation package in April that cuts total business rates paid by the retail sector by roughly 20% while increasing those of large distribution warehouses by 27%.

Debenhams closed its final department stores in May 2021. The former flagship store on Oxford Street is being redeveloped into sustainable office and retail space.

The national Covid lockdowns of 2020-21 were a fatal blow to many regional department stores, but the sector's demise had been decades in the making. The roots of its troubles can be traced back half a century. The first blow actually seemed to be benign, if not a boon. From the early 1970s, local authorities encouraged the construction of out-of-town shopping centres that brought in additional business rates and enabled them to pedestrianise town centres. John Lewis, a stalwart of the high street under various local names since the 1930s, opened its first out-of-town store in 1972.

As more people bought their own car – 45% of households in the UK had one by 1975, according to the RAC – driving to out-of-town shopping centres became fashionable. But, because most regular shopping was done by women who tended not to be the driver in a household, the high street still reigned supreme. That would change as vehicle ownership increased and more women became drivers. By 1981, for instance, 15% of British households owned more than one vehicle.

By 2016, the year in which a third of households had two vehicles or more, out-of-town shopping centres with plentiful free parking and a wide range of stores had become particularly popular with wealthy young aspirational consumers.

In 2000, Ipsos Mori reported that the high street appealed most to the "traditional working classes", while out-of-town centres were the place for more "prestige-conscious and materialistic shoppers".

That might not have mattered for town-centre department stores, except that the purchasing power of their predominantly working-class clientele was shrinking. When *Are You Being Served?*, the sitcom set in the fictional department store Grace Brothers, was at the peak of its popularity in 1977, the median disposable household income in the UK was 10.3% lower than the mean average (a figure skewed upwards by the super-rich). By 2021, the difference had increased to 18%, indicating that the gap between rich and poor had widened significantly.

> **The closure of a department store in regional town is a blow that knocks out the two front teeth of a high street**

This factor explains why department stores at the top end of the market have been largely untouched by the problems affecting the rest of the sector.

"They have a resolute focus on luxury and style, often with a singular view of the world and a customer base that's largely immune to economic woes," Cross notes.

He adds that high-end players such as Harrods, Fortnum & Mason, Harvey Nichols and Selfridges have "generally flourished" in recent years, despite the pandemic. "All of this has clearly been far harder for regional department stores."

The problems that have come with the decline of regional high streets are not lost on the government. Its "Build back better high streets" campaign aims to enable the "evolution of high streets into thriving places to work, visit and live".

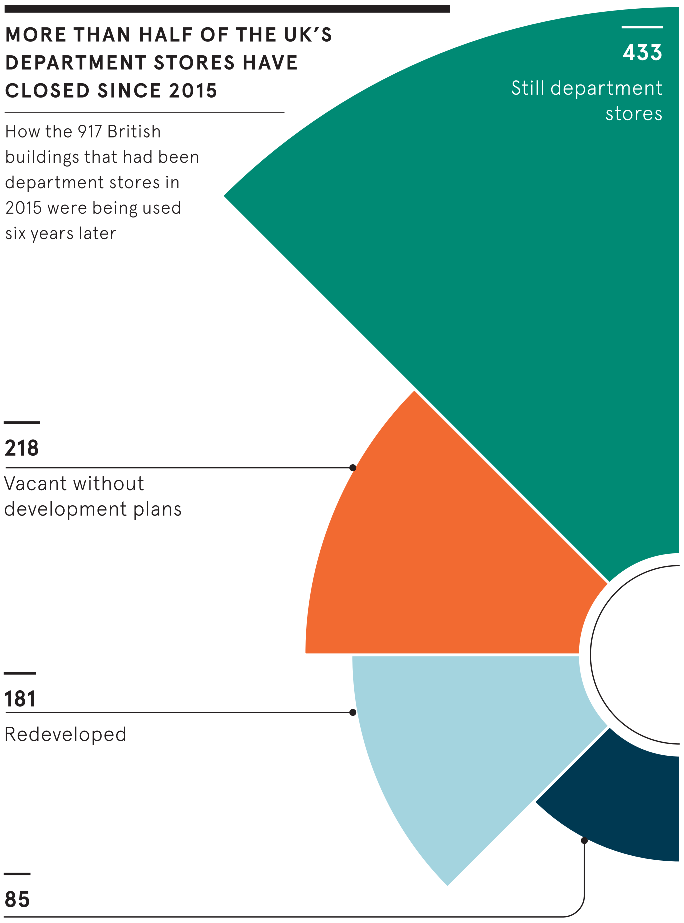
But cash-strapped local authorities around the country will have to do most of the work to achieve such an outcome. So what can they do?

The genteel spa town of Harrogate, North Yorkshire, lost its Debenhams in 2021, although it still has a department store left. This has gone through several hands over the years, but its current owner is Hoopers. The chain was established in 1982 – a time when planning authorities were busy approving out-of-town developments. Hoopers has four branches remaining, having left five other towns around England.

The challenge is clear to Richard Cooper, leader of Harrogate Borough

MORE THAN HALF OF THE UK'S DEPARTMENT STORES HAVE CLOSED SINCE 2015

How the 917 British buildings that had been department stores in 2015 were being used six years later



Nexus Planning, 2021

Council. "We want to ensure that our high streets are prosperous in the future and we need to look at new ways of achieving that," he says. "They need to be attractive and inviting, providing something you can't get at home by looking on your laptop, tablet or smartphone."

Knaresborough and Ripon are two towns in the borough that host weekly markets offering "unique and homemade produce", he adds, and there's a monthly farmers' market in Harrogate itself.

"We've recently partnered with an artisan market that operates regularly in our picturesque Valley Gardens and also the grounds of Knaresborough Castle. Again, this provides something that's unique and unobtainable online, which can complement what businesses on the high street offer," Cooper says.

Cross points out that a few town centres have held up well. He attributes the decline of others to reasons including a lacklustre response from local authorities that have failed to appreciate the shifts in consumer behaviour and "the pivotal role the high street plays in supporting the local community".

Harrogate Borough Council, by contrast, is well aware of such factors. With these in mind, it has set up a destination management organisation for the district. This works with several partners to host events, attract visitors and court investors. The overall aim, Cooper says, is "to create a strong local economy for businesses and residents".

That is, of course, easier said than done. Regional department stores were often big employers. Beatties in Wolverhampton, for instance, once employed 800 people. With its beauty parlour, hair salon and cafés, it was a real focal point.

Beatties closed its doors for the last time in 2020. Most of the grand art deco building it occupied is due to be converted into flats, with some space retained for retail units.

Stephen Simkins, deputy leader of the City of Wolverhampton Council, said in August 2021: "We need to ensure that a building of this importance is brought back into use. We have been working closely with the owners to ensure that they have the support needed to bring this scheme forward."

As this special report goes to press, the planned redevelopment has still not started. Part of the delay may be down to Wolverhampton's wider plans in line with Westminster's levelling-up policies. The city is one of the government's first two so-called pathfinder locations and it is working with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on three main investment plans mixing residential, leisure and commercial developments.

Yet there may be a light at the end of the tunnel for the few town-centre department stores that are hanging on in there. Since the end of the Covid crisis, people seem to have been rediscovering the high street – in attractive tourist destinations such as Harrogate, at least.

"Figures released in mid-March show that visitors to our district are making a greater economic impact here now than they were before the pandemic," Cross reports.

Tourists stayed longer and spent 5% more in Harrogate last year than they'd done in 2019, contributing £637m to the local economy.

This will, no doubt, have been encouraging news for Hoopers. For most town-centre department stores, the return of shoppers to the high street cannot come soon enough.

Commercial feature

Breaking down barriers to cross-border ecommerce

The global online shopping market is growing fast, but regulatory and logistical hurdles hold retailers back. With the right support companies can capitalise on the opportunities

The global ecommerce market continues to grow strongly as consumers embrace the convenience and value of online shopping. According to research from investment bank Morgan Stanley, over a fifth of all retail sales were made online last year, up from 15% in 2019. And the bank forecasts this will rise to 27% by 2026, equating to a total market value of $5.4tn (£4.4tn), up from $3.3tn (£2.7tn) today.

It is creating huge opportunities for ambitious retailers seeking to grow their reach beyond their own domestic markets. Yet many are held back by barriers around payments, localisation and regulations, and are unsure how to overcome them.

"Global expansion is integral to overall ecommerce growth, yet many firms struggle to enter new markets and thrive," says Hakan Thyr, chief revenue officer at Fruugo, a global online marketplace that helps retailers acquire new customers around the world.

"But with the right support and technology retailers can overcome the barriers and capitalise on the opportunities ahead."



Hurdles to selling overseas

International expansion inevitably comes with a number of challenges. Any retailer selling abroad must make their marketing country-specific, requiring market research to be conducted and product descriptions and advertisements to be translated into multiple languages. Global teams must be put in place to handle customer enquiries from around the world.

Retailers must also navigate a patchwork of different rules and regulations from country to country or face potential disruption to deliveries. VAT and local taxes vary, and it is important that retailers calculate these rates correctly. Environmental compliance has also become a challenge, as countries bring in laws to promote recycling and tackle waste that directly impact ecommerce businesses.

Among other challenges, retailers selling abroad must do so in multiple currencies, making sure payments are processed based on day-to-day and week-to-week currency fluctuations. Local payment preferences also vary, with consumers favouring credit and debit cards in some regions, while those elsewhere opt for mobile apps, digital wallets and payment service providers such as PayPal.

> Global expansion is integral to overall ecommerce growth, yet many firms struggle to enter new markets and thrive

Tackling the problem

Founded in Finland in 2006 but based in the UK since 2012, Fruugo helps retailers to overcome these hurdles and grow their customer base in 45 different markets. Firms that use the site can sell to shoppers around the world, in the shoppers' language and currency, through one secure global marketplace without any upfront cost or fixed fees.

"Fruugo actively markets retailers' products around the globe, using search ads in local markets to promote our sellers' products," says Thyr. "To date we are now in our third consecutive year of sales growth in excess of 100% year-on-year."

Fruugo's automatic translation technology translates product descriptions into 28 different languages, localising the shopping experience for consumers wherever they are in the world. Fruugo also provides retailers with insights into product demand in foreign markets to help them grow their business.

The platform enables retailers to be paid in their own currency, yet sell in 31 major currencies without any risk. The customer is charged the same commission regardless of where they are based, and which currency and payment method they used.

Meanwhile, Fruugo adapts to country-specific payment methods, using a wide range of best-in-class payment service providers that provide comprehensive fraud protection. The firm also has a dedicated team of account managers to handle customer and retailer queries, taking the job off retailers' hands.

Tapping into the expanding global ecommerce market is key for companies wishing to grow in an increasingly competitive retail landscape. And with Fruugo, retailers are able to reduce the complexity in trading across borders and grow their footprint in new markets.

Visit sell.fruugo.com for more information

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TIMES 2
March 30 | 2023



'I think Michelin hate me and I'll never get a star again'

Why chef Skye Gyngell regrets saying that winning the prestigious award was a 'curse'

Guns don't kill, people do! And that is why we need to ban people…

Deborah Ross



'Guns don't kill people, people do," says that powerful lobbying group, the National Rifle Association, every time there is a school shooting in America, as there was this week, and as they've been saying since about 1910.

Yet in all those years they haven't seen it through to its logical conclusion, and while I am, frankly, fed up of doing everything around here, I suppose I must point out the obvious: we need to get rid of people. People have had 300,000 years, give or take, to get their act together and I've totally lost patience with them — had it up to here.

They have to go. That gun is not going to get up off that table and fire itself. It's people, they're what's at the root of all this. If you happen to know any people it's time, I'm afraid, to say your goodbyes.

You could say people with guns kill more people than people without guns, or people who only have access to spoons, but, come on, it still comes down to one thing and the same thing: people.

As the bestselling author Tom Clancy once put it: "No firearm has ever killed anyone unless directed by a person." Or as Charlton Heston put it when he was president of the NRA and was asked what Congress could do to stem the tide of violent crime: "Punish criminals, senator."

You see what I'm getting at? Only people can be criminals. A rabbit can't. A doorknob can't. A dog can steal a string of sausages but doesn't know what it's doing, really. It would be useless at trial, hopeless, bewildered. Guns aren't the problem. People are.

This is why I'm calling for a stop on people. And not guns. Guns are great. Guns are magnificent. Guns are a glorious thing, beautifully engineered to project an object as forcefully as possible in the same way, for example, a salad spinner is beautifully engineered to spin salad.

But until you throw people into the mix that salad isn't going to get spun. Same with guns. Until you throw people into the mix, that gun isn't going to transform itself into a deadly weapon; that gun isn't going to shoot 154 rounds in four minutes killing 20 children aged between six and seven.

It's just going to sit there, amoral, inert, neutral, benign, minding its own business. Don't blame guns. Blame people. One of them has to go. It shouldn't be guns. The intermediary, that's who's at fault here.

Guns can be trusted. People can't. People can get angry and depressed. A gun can't. People can be insane. A gun can't. People can rage about the women who won't sleep with them. A gun can't. But as we've no way of knowing which people are going to lose it when, it's best we rid ourselves of them all. Goodbye!

Better safe than sorry. Let's imagine this: a woman dates a man, goes back to his place, a gun is on his coffee table. She doesn't want to go "upstairs", calls a cab, he shoots her dead, goes on a rampage up and down the street. Is the gun to blame for this scenario? Would it, in fact, be any different if he only had access to a spoon? Where are the laws against spoons? And why isn't there ever a big fuss about spoon control? That's what I'd dearly like to know.

Only if we wipe ourselves out will guns be allowed to do what they were made to do, which is just sit around, innocuously. It's time we got out of the picture, left them to it. We had our chance and we messed up. We should have more faith in what bumper stickers have to say. As for the NRA's follow-up analogy along the lines of "cars don't kill people, people do", I know the answer to that one too: more cars. I truly don't want to be doing everything around here, but as I am the only one who can see clearly it's my duty, I guess.

CHENEY ORR/REUTERS



A memorial to the victims of the Covenant School shooting in Nashville

How to be cheerful: my tips

According to a survey by Gallup of 113 countries we are sadder than we have ever been. That's the other thing about people. You give them better life expectancies. You give them more time in education than ever before, you give them a halving of the infant mortality rate, you give them a decline in extreme poverty, you give them a doubling of music available to stream every four years … and still they're glum! It beggars belief. It seriously does.

The sooner we're rid the better, but I'm not a fool, I know it's not going to happen today, so in the meantime how might you cheer yourself up? What do we have to feel cheerful about on a day-to-day basis? As I'm stuck with doing everything around here, even though it's not something I've asked for, I'd best give you a few ideas, so here goes.

***Succession*, it's back, so that's every Monday night until June spent in perfect bliss even if you never see any of the main players do any actual work, which is a bit odd. T-shirts with longer short sleeves, beloved by older women everywhere, yet rarer than hen's teeth, well, I've just discovered Agnès B do them. Pricey, but they look like they'll hold their shape. (Big news.)**

Meanwhile, blossom is coming out, daffodils are springing up, and hot cross buns are everywhere, but Marmite ones? Really? You don't have to think about that if it makes you sad. Also, why not pretend you've just been released from prison? It works for me. And if you're depressed about John Lewis, and the prospect it might go belly up? Try this for size: it's only a shop! Feel better now?

Yes, I've had a

New figures show that demand for cosmetic surgery has soared. I'm no stranger to it, says Fiona Golfar



This week the release of the annual audit from the British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons (BAAPS) revealed a 102 per cent rise in procedures during 2022. According to the figures, 31,057 cosmetic procedures took place last year.

Due to the combined effect of the pandemic and the rise of social media there has never been a higher demand for invasive cosmetic surgery. If you should fancy Bella Hadid's "fox" eyes or Pamela Anderson's boobs, a tummy tuck or a thigh lift, or you even want to say goodbye to your bingo wings, you only have to scroll through Instagram to see the before and after images and take your pick from the abundance of surgeons available.

I'm no stranger to the knife and had a tummy tuck about 15 years ago. My lower stomach looked like a bag for life after my two babies and no amount of exercise was going to fix that. Then, eight years ago when I was 52 I had a neck and lower facelift. I regret neither. They were life-changing in many ways but that was long before there were such things as influencers, or the reference library of Instagram with its filtered pictures offering a "Hollywood finish".

Personally, I didn't want to look like someone else, just a refreshed me. I went to see a lot of doctors before committing to either procedure. I did that because I knew myself and how overexcited I could get and commit to something on the spot in a mad rush of adrenaline that I was bound to regret later. I wrote about my experience and found that I got calls from women, some of whom I barely knew, asking me in whispers to tell them "who" I was "seeing".

My lower facelift was performed by former BAAPS president Dr Rajiv Grover who, post-Covid, has seen a huge surge in demand for his subtle skilled services. "I am not on social media, I find that kind satisfied customers recommend me, but I have also seen my client list has doubled in the past couple of years," he says.

The backlog from the pandemic partly explains why we are seeing this rise. Last year had the largest annual increase since the audit began in 2004.

"But," Grover says, "social media has also become a powerful tool as traditionally plastic surgery was something that was discreetly discussed via word of mouth."

Famous for his natural-looking deep plane facelifts, he is very specific about who he will operate on. "I have a simple yardstick — if it isn't right for my aunt, sister, mother, I won't do it."

I get a lot of calls from women asking me for advice about who to see. I tend to refer them to the person who advised me, Olivia Falcon a former beauty editor and founder of The Editor's List. She has the best surgeons in the business in her contacts.

"I have seen a massive uptick in demand for surgical procedures," Falcon says. "Where women used to say they didn't want to even discuss it and only wanted to know about non-invasive options, now they are asking about eyes, usually upper blepharoplasty, neck and lower face and then boobs."

Dr Maryam Zamani, an oculoplastic surgeon, has also seen a huge rise in demand for the transformative skills of her scalpel. "A lot of people come in and ask for 'fox eye', which is a lift that elevates the brow and lifts the corner of the eye. It used to be called a temporal brow lift and now it just has a fancy name."

But, she adds, there is a real trend of younger women (and, increasingly, men) who go to her brandishing a retouched image of themselves or a celebrity whose features they would like to emulate. That can be worrying so she won't always treat them.

"I would say my practice has seen a 60 per cent increase in surgical procedures in the past 24 months."

As for me, I'm 60 and I'm pretty content with things as they are. But who knows — will I get my eyes done one of these days? Never say never.

facelift, why keep it secret?

SOPHIA SPRING FOR THE TIMES



Fiona Golfar

My old nose irritated me

Annabel Fenwick Elliott

My one regret about getting a £7,000 nose job, at the age of 31? That I didn't do it sooner. Indeed, I will forever wonder what my twenties would have been like had I had that extra confidence in my appearance. And let's not pretend I had it done for any other reason than that. I know people will often say they've had cosmetic surgery "for themselves and no one else", but in many cases it's an invasive undertaking rooted solely in vanity. No one would go under the knife were the rest of the population blind.

Having said that, it wasn't even that I despised my snout — it was more that it irritated me. Particularly since it had been a photogenic ski slope in shape right up until I hit my teens, when it developed an uneven ridge, and I missed its former iteration. As it was later revealed to me after the operation, there was a good explanation for this deformity, which I'll address further on.

My misgivings were confirmed to me while I was researching a story on plastic surgery about a decade ago. I had visited five of the best plastic surgeons in Los Angeles and asked them all what they'd do to "perfect" my face. Each one had a slightly different game plan but they were unanimous in regards to my nose: the bump needed filing down and the tip could do with a slight lift.

After that, I was determined to get the deed done, put off only by the fear of pain (which was, to my surprise, entirely unfounded) and the financial commitment (substantial: rhinoplasty costs anywhere from £3,000 to north of £12,000 in the UK).

By 31, though, I was ready. I shopped around for a while before I found Tunc Tiryaki, a Turkish specialist with a clinic off Harley Street. He promised me it wouldn't hurt and he was right. Despite looking like I'd been beaten around the head by a baseball bat for two weeks afterwards, there are no nerve endings in the cartilage of the nose so, while the swelling was uncomfortable and I was a fright to behold, the procedure itself resulted in zero soreness.

This is not to say it was a walk in the park. With a splint and both nostrils stuffed to support healing, I was to sleep sitting upright for the first five days. As an introvert, hiding away for weeks until the bruising subsided wasn't an issue, but opening the door to the postman was embarrassing, as was going back to work and facing the barrage of interrogations. But the cons were a small price to pay for the pros.

There was an unexpected practical benefit too. I had almost certainly broken my nose in my early teens, Tiryaki informed me (again, no nerve endings there would have meant limited pain, meaning it could easily have happened without me knowing, perhaps by way of an errant netball). This had resulted in a deviated septum, which meant I'd been breathing through only one nostril. Sure enough, once the dressings were removed there was a notable difference as soon as I took my first inhale using both nostrils.

People are always flummoxed by how open I am about having had a nose job, as if it should be a dirty secret. And it is, of course, easy to judge someone who has chosen to take a chisel to their face in the name of egotism. But anyone who waxes, dyes their greys or wouldn't dream of turning up to a party sans make-up is just as guilty of wanting to optimise the appearance of the vessel they were born with.



Annabel Fenwick Elliott

Cost, I suspect, is the greatest barrier. Were it not, cosmetic surgery would be as common for the rest of us as it is among Hollywood stars, which is to say: very.

I can't promise I'll stop there, either. If money were no object, I'd have my jaw tightened, my post-baby boobs put back to their rightful place and the gap in my teeth fixed for good measure.

I now like what I see

Deborah Ellis

In my forties, whenever I looked in the mirror, all I saw were the sad things in my life reflected back at me — failed relationships, business stress and the pressures of being a single mum. As I approached my 50th birthday I wanted my appearance to match the person on the inside.

The Botox and filler I'd been having for more than 15 years were no longer giving me the appearance I wanted. Then, when I gave up drinking in 2018 and lost three stone, my face lost more volume and sagged, particularly around my neck and jawline.

After months of research, I travelled from Kent, where I run a vintage shop, to Turkey last March for a "deep plane facelift" with upper and lower eye lifts, and liposuction and fat transfer from my chin to my cheeks to create volume.

Whereas a standard facelift cuts the facial skin and pulls it taut, a deep plane lift is performed on the muscles and fascia beneath the face. It's more expensive, more risky — facial nerves are exposed and damage is possible — and requires a longer general anaesthetic. Complications are more likely, but a deep plane lift is said to create a less stretched look, and lasts longer (about ten years on average) than a skin-only facelift. In Turkey the price was £5,250, compared with the more than £40,000 charged by some experienced surgeons in the UK.

I travelled alone to Antalya on March 25, 2022, the day before my surgery, to meet the surgeon and undergo a pre-op medical assessment. The surgery was major and took six hours. When I regained consciousness my eyes were so swollen I could barely see, and there were drains removing extra blood and fluid from my face. It wasn't painful — medication helped with that — but my face felt restricted, my hair was matted with blood and my jaw ached. It was only when I looked at my face that day that the enormity of my decision hit me.

The next few days passed in a blur. I slept upright to help excess fluid to drain away. My eyes were puffy and I had to wear a supportive "face bra" to minimise bruising and swelling.

My cage fighter-like appearance lasted weeks. Even a month afterwards, my face was still puffy. A dent had appeared in my cheek. Scars behind my ears made sunglasses painful.

After three months the results became more obvious — I looked natural, not stretched, no longer exhausted. It's only now, a year on, that my face is truly settled. It's not perfect: the dent in my cheek never sorted itself out, and I've had problems with a nerve in my face causing pain, so I am returning to the surgeon to have a revision. But, on balance, I now (mostly) like what I see in the mirror these days, and that's priceless.

As told to Nicole Mowbray

The lowdown
Kourtney Kardashian

Mayday! Mayday! Woman eating!

Oh heavens, no. In public?

Yes. For show. On Instagram.

shudders. We should add that to the list of places we don't like to see food being consumed.

File it with "at the desk" and "on public transport".

Ha. But in all seriousness, we're joking — right?

Very much so. But images of a famous personality chowing down have actually outraged the general Insta-public.

Then I have to conclude that they sound like a fairly unreasonable lot.

Well… decide for yourself.

All right, I shall! Who is the woman in question and where was she snacking?

Kourtney Kardashian.

Which one of the Klan is she?

She's married to Travis Barker, the Blink-182 drummer. They had that big hoo-ha of a wedding in Portofino last year.

Can't say that means much to me. Anyway — the meal location?

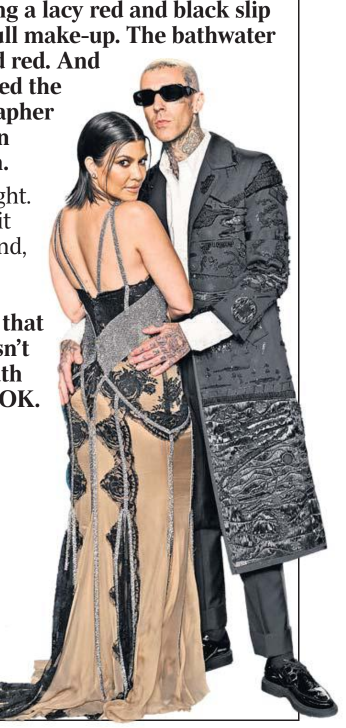
In the bath.

Oh no. No! I'm picturing soggy crisps and it's upsetting me. Ugh.

You and the rest of the internet. The Kardashian-Barkers uploaded pictures of themselves soaking in their suds surrounded by plates of food. Kourtney was even taking a bite out of a burger. IN THE BATH. A subsequent image saw it left ON THE TOILET.

My. That's very Elvis of her. But why? Have I missed another trend?

Not really. Looks as if it was for a photoshoot, given that Kardashian is wearing a lacy red and black slip and in full make-up. The bathwater was dyed red. And she tagged the photographer Ellen von Unwerth.



Right, right. She's a bit of a legend, no?

Yes. But that still doesn't make bath burgers OK.

Hannah Rogers

the table

Regrets? The chef who walked away from her Michelin star has a few …

At 60, Skye Gyngell may be so successful that she can charge £835 for her new 'dining experience', but she rues some of her decisions. By Julia Llewellyn Smith



Skye Gyngell is sitting in a private dining room in south London, tables lavishly decorated for the 'gram, cringing at a screen on the wall showing shot after shot of Gyngell striding across fields in wellies, Gyngell in a kitchen, Gyngell in a greenhouse inspecting herbs.

"I cannot bear it," she says. "I've never said I was a model. I have not made a career out of my looks. I've never wanted to be on television. It's all about the food."

It's true that Gyngell, a youthful-looking, strawberry-blonde 60, usually at her restaurant Spring at Somerset House, has avoided the judging/hosting/*Saturday Kitchen* cameos that most chef "names" regard as vital to the job. Yet, viz the excitement of the influencers summoned to tonight's preview for her latest venture Spring Garden, a new "dining experience" at May's Chelsea Flower Show, she's very much a culinary superstar.

"I was incredibly excited to do Spring Garden because for me a garden centre feels very much like coming home — that's where I started my career. Chelsea is just in a much bigger way — catering for 1,000 people a day," she says of her partnership with the luxury event catering company Alison Price & Company, which will provide all-day dining packages featuring breakfast, tea, lunch, cocktails and dinner at a cost of between £440 and £835 per person (plus VAT).

Indeed, Gyngell came to the world's attention in 2004 when she set up Petersham Nurseries restaurant for the socialite couple Francesco and Gael Boglione, originally with 25 seats around one long marble table in the ramshackle garden centre behind their mansion near Richmond.

"They thought: 'Let's see what we can do.' No money was spent, they fixed a couple of panes of glass, the kitchen was originally in a garden shed then in Francesco's garage where he'd kept his vintage Ferrari, the equipment was all second-hand, we cooked on a four-burner stove with bottled gas that would run out. Yet it grew in spite of itself."

> We used to have so many people come from abroad to work. Brexit was the silliest thing

Soon the narrow lane leading to this shabby-chic enclave, with dirt floors, wobbly tables and loos in a wooden shed, was rammed with limos waiting for the likes of Mick Jagger, Stella McCartney and Madonna, who flocked to try Gyngell's cooking with its emphasis on fresh ingredients imaginatively combined.

For years I've used a chickpea with lime and coriander recipe from that era, which looks like sludge and tastes of nectar, as a dinner-party staple. "Oh yes, chickpeas, there's carrots and tomatoes… lots of maple syrup," she says, instantly on it. "It definitely doesn't look fancy but that's the kind of food I like — big, stewy things. I don't really feel I'm a chef. I'm a cook."

Michelin — normally known for rewarding cheffy-style fiddly amuse-bouches and jus — thought otherwise, and in 2011 awarded Petersham a star. "Michelin has changed tremendously in the past 10-12 years, but then stars were reserved for much more high-end restaurants, so for us to get one was very unusual and also challenging with so little infrastructure," Gyngell recalls in her light voice with no trace of her Australian ancestry.

"I mean those chickpeas weren't Michelin — that's all about little plates and pulling off the domes and drama. But then people would come expecting that and you'd get complaints and drama: 'Call yourself a Michelin-starred place?' We were, like, 'No, we didn't, Michelin did!' It was a rejigging of how people saw us."

A year later Gyngell quit Petersham, attributing the decision, in a passing comment, to "the curse of Michelin".

"I wish I'd never said that because it's been really hard to live it down," she sighs. "I think Michelin completely hate me for that comment and I will never get a Michelin star again."

Is that the end of the world?

"I don't really care about a star, but I've had the luxury of having one. It would be nice for the [Spring] team." Last year the Guide relented enough to award one of its rare green stars for sustainability to Marle, one of the three restaurants at Heckfield Place, the Hampshire hotel where she's culinary director. "On the day those were being given out I did feel for [Spring's] chef, because Spring was the first restaurant in the UK to go plastic free, we have a commitment with one organic farm, we've done a food waste menu since 2016."

But Michelin wasn't the only reason Gyngell left Petersham. "It was time to leave anyway, that last winter; it was raining and muddy, it was always freezing down there in the morning and the kitchens were never really heated, we had all the gas burners on and jumpers underneath our chef's jackets, and we'd stand and warm our backs against the stoves. I turned to another chef and said: 'I can't do this another year.'"

There was also the matter of her then young-ish daughters (they're now 33 and 26) from two different fathers. "I hadn't seen my kids at the weekend for, like, nine years; my youngest was under ten and I just was never home. It's really hard to have kids and work in restaurants — the hours are hard and it's very tough to be a part-time head chef. Kitchens are a lot less scary and intimidating than they used to be, and there are a lot more women now, but there are still many more men."

Yet despite her good reasons, few abandon such a prestigious career with nothing else lined up. About the same time she left her younger daughter's father and moved out of the family home. "I left Petersham without any resources at all. I had about enough money to pay the mortgage for three months. I literally jumped off the precipice without wings. It was a very tough few years, but I kind of got through it," she told one health blogger, blaming the meltdown on "menopause insanity".

Now Gyngell says: "It could have been the menopause. But I don't want to talk about it because I have no idea if that actually was the reason. I think it's incredibly important what Davina McCall has done [to publicise issues around the menopause], but I don't see myself as a spokesperson.

"I changed up everything and that was the right thing to do. I felt what I'd done at Petersham was amazing but it was time to move on, I didn't have anything to go to, but I had faith." How were things left with the Bogliones? "It was sad for both of us, but we're still really good friends — I'm seeing them on Wednesday night."

OK, let's call the move a midlife crisis — and one from which Gyngell emerged triumphantly. Nine years ago, investors in place, she opened Spring, which with its high ceilings and central location couldn't have been more different from Petersham ("there's two kitchens, a wine cellar, all the infrastructure!") and won glowing reviews.

Gyngell grew up in Sydney, the daughter of the flamboyant television executive Bruce Gyngell, the man who gave the UK ITV's TV-am (remember Roland Rat?). She was an awkward child who struggled to find a niche, dropping out of law school before she began training as a chef, working in various top Paris and London restaurants, including the Dorchester.

Along the way she fought a 20-year addiction to heroin and alcohol, something she dislikes discussing. Having overcome that, she moved into private catering, where clients included Nigella Lawson, Trinny Woodall, Madonna and Guy Ritchie, before the Bogliones headhunted her.

COVER: MARK HARRISON/CAMERA PRESS. BELOW: KATIE WILSON FOR THE TIMES


Skye Gyngell

She sighs discussing the huge recruitment problems her industry is facing. "We used to have so many people come from abroad to work — young kids that come from the south of Italy or wherever with the culture of food, but they're just not here any more, you can't get a visa. Brexit was the silliest thing in the world. [British] people don't see [hospitality] as a career, even though it can be amazing. The entry-level we pay is more than teachers, nurses, junior doctors — they're getting, what, £12 an hour?"

One restaurateur friend complains that staff now demand — illogically — to work from home, and shun late-night and weekend shifts. "It's a crazy industry where we've all worked ourselves to the bone, we can easily do 48 hours to 60 hours a week. It used to be a badge of honour to work that much, but after Covid there's a lot of 'I don't want to work that hard' and I can hear them."

Meanwhile, work-from-home culture has led to a completely different rhythm. "Fridays used to be our busiest day for work lunches, now they're relatively quiet. We're closed on Mondays. Thursday is probably the new Friday. Actually, it might be Wednesday, or Tuesday."

The influencers are still rhapsodising about their rhubarb jelly and set cream with honey and muscat when Gyngell, who's happily single, slips into the night, to drive home to Shepherd's Bush. "I often get home and realise I've eaten nothing all day — the smells satiate your appetite. So then I have Vegemite on toast."

Skye Gyngell's spring salad

Serves 4

Ingredients

For the salad

- 500g broad beans, podded
- 500g fresh peas, podded
- 4 white asparagus spears
- 4 green asparagus spears
- 5 breakfast radishes, washed and patted dry
- 200g stracciatella cheese
- 1 Meyer lemon or unwaxed lemon, skin on but remove any pips
- 120ml extra virgin olive oil, plus extra for drizzling
- A handful of spring herbs (chervil, dill, tarragon)
- Juice of half a lemon
- Sea salt
- Confit lemon, to serve

For the broad bean leaf oil

- 10 broad bean flowers and leaves
- 1 litre grape seed oil
- A handful of blanched spinach
- A good pinch of salt

Method

1 Place the broad bean flowers and leaves, a good pinch of salt and the blanched spinach in a food processor. Pour in the oil and blitz on the highest speed for two minutes or until completely smooth. Remove and strain through a muslin. Keep in the fridge.

2 Start the salad by slicing the lemons as finely as you can into rounds. Place the olive oil into a small pan and warm on the lowest possible heat (around 60C). Add the lemon rounds and cook slowly, keeping the heat very low until the lemons are soft and creamy. Remove from the heat and set aside.

3 Place a pan of well-salted water on to boil. Once boiling add the broad beans and cook for two minutes. Remove using a slotted spoon and place immediately into iced water (to stop them cooking and retain their colour). Add the peas to the water and cook for three minutes. Drain and refresh in the ice water.

4 Wash and pat dry the asparagus. Remove two inches of the woody base and discard. Slice very finely at a sharp angle and place in a bowl with the peas and broad beans. Slice the radishes very finely and add. Season with a little salt, a few drops of lemon juice and drizzle with a little extra virgin olive oil. It should taste bright and glossy.

5 To serve, place the stracciatella in the middle of each plate and arrange the vegetables on top. Top with a slice of confit lemon and scatter over the herbs. Finish with a drizzle of broad bean leaf oil and serve immediately.



Note: you can use a selection of any young, sweet spring vegetables that you can find. If you can't find stracciatella, burrata is a perfect substitute. If you can't find broad bean leaves, use a handful of flat-leaf parsley.

springgarden.eventist.group

You've had Christmas panettone — Easter colomba is even better

Giulia Crouch can't resist the Italian festive treat

Panettone, the brioche-like Italian Christmas bread studded with raisins and candied fruits, is more popular in the UK than ever. But I want to let you in on a secret: there is an Easter version and it's even better.

Colomba, which means dove in Italian, has the same rich and fluffy texture as its Christmas cousin but without any of the (in my opinion) unnecessary raisins. Instead it contains candied orange peel and has a crunchy and sweet pearl sugar and almond topping.

The Italian chef Gennaro Contaldo has fond memories of the celebration cake. "I always remember it being on the table at Easter when I was a child," he says. "Shaped like a dove, it symbolises peace and new beginnings."

Alex Owens, head chef of the Italian restaurant Archway in Battersea, was a latecomer to the Easter treat. "As I am only an aspiring Italian, I was introduced to colomba later in life. But my sous-chef Lorenzo has been eating it every Easter since he can remember. When I told him it was better than panettone, he scoffed and said: 'You've obviously never had good panettone.'

"Wrong. Colomba is light and fluffy, buttery, and then has this sugary crust encasing its precious better-than-brioche centre. It doesn't have any pesky raisins, so you're able to wolf down as much as possible without getting caught chewing things where they shouldn't be. And, unlike panettone, colomba doesn't make it to being put into a bread and butter pudding, because it's too good. I know it seems as though I'm setting up an Italian bread battle, but it's more that I'm just upset that I wasn't introduced to colomba sooner. Please make sure this doesn't happen to you."

To ensure this isn't the case, here are my favourites available to buy for your table this Easter.


Classic colomba

> "I'm upset that I didn't have colomba sooner. Make sure this doesn't happen to you

Colomba: 6 of the best

Muzzi Classic Colomba
£26.99, 1kg
If you want to try a traditional colomba, this is what you should go for. Made using a slow-leavened sourdough method and plump and zesty oranges from the south of Italy, it is rich and citrussy at the same time. *souschef.co.uk*

Waitrose Easter Colomba Cake
£14.50, 750g
Waitrose has joined the party with its own, good-value version of a colomba, and was in fact the first supermarket to sell it. It recommends serving it with fresh red berries and cream for dessert, but I prefer it slathered with a hazelnut chocolate spread and washed down with a cup of tea. *waitrose.com*


Muzzi Classic Colomba

Vergani Pistachio Cream Colomba
£24.90, 850g
At Eataly, an emporium of Italian food supplies in London (and online), there is the biggest selection of colomba in the UK. This one comes with a sweet pistachio cream and piping bag so that you can take your sweet spread application to the next level. *eataly.co.uk*

Tommaso Muzzi Pear and Chocolate Colomba
£19.90, 750g
You cannot go wrong with the winning combo of pear and chocolate, and in this perfectly fluffy cake it is the dream. Much, much better than raisins! *eataly.co.uk*

Fiasconaro x Dolce & Gabbana Strawberry & Chocolate Colomba Gift Tin
£61.29, 1kg
Want to be bouji this Easter? This is the chicest colomba money can buy. The fashion house Dolce & Gabbana has collaborated with the legendary baker Fiasconaro to make a delectable treat in a beautiful blue and white tin. Swirled with wild strawberry jam, the cake contains chocolate drops and a dark chocolate topping, and the tin comes with a jar of chocolate spread, just in case that wasn't enough. Bellissima. *souschef.co.uk*

Colomba Gran Galup 'Flower Edition' — Wild Berries and Yoghurt
£24.89, 750g
Galup, a panettone specialist since 1922, is from the Piedmont region of Italy. The area is known for its hazelnuts so, of course, Galup incorporates them into this twist on the original. The light and airy bread is swirled with wild berry yoghurt infused with dried, partially candied berries, and covered with hazelnut glaze made with "tonda gentile trilobata" hazelnuts and garnished with whole roasted almonds and sugar granules. Delicious. *piccantino.co.uk*

times2

GETTY IMAGES (POSED BY MODELS)



My flat was an Airbnb party pad

As the government promises to crack down on rowdy rentals, Katie Glass recalls her most memorable guests

If I hadn't decided to stalk my hot Airbnb guest on Instagram then I would have remained blissfully unaware of the party he decided to throw in my flat and, more specifically, in my bed. But there it was in glossy filters on his social media account — trendy-looking boys and girls spilling glasses of champagne around my space. Later I found more evidence of an overflowing ashtray upended, bottles of wine rolling on the floor and my precious velvet armchairs shoved out of the way to make an impromptu dance space.

I should have known that renting my flat in "trendy east London" to a musician in town for the Brits was a mistake. Usually, I was good at screening guests. I'd become adept at turning away weird men asking questions about whether I knew my neighbours, 18-year-olds booking for just one night and anyone who wanted to come on New Year's Eve. Still, I turned my radar off this time because I fancied him so much. I handed over my keys and trotted off on holiday. It was only while lying on a beach that I decided to Instagram-stalk the man I'd rented my flat to and discovered the party. Still, he wasn't my worst guest…

This week, as the government published an action plan aimed at addressing concerns over rowdy Airbnb guests "importing antisocial behaviour into communities", my friends and I swapped stories about the nightmare guests we'd hosted through the home-sharing website. Government proposals include setting up a register of people Airbnbing their homes to help the council identify "problematic" properties where noise problems, drunken behaviour and disorderly conduct take place. But as anyone who has let their home out knows, that simply comes with the territory.

I was an early Airbnb adopter. I started Airbnbing my London flat in 2014 as soon as I clocked that I could rent out my bed for £200 a night and put the money towards holidays. Now, almost a decade later, everyone I know is doing Airbnb — listing their flats, spare rooms, barns and caravans, often even renting their own beds out from under themselves via the site. But as home rentals have become more normal, so too have stories of rowdy parties and outrageous guests.

A friend, Martin, who rents out his tastefully decorated flat in north London on Airbnb, recalls one charming man trying to book it for a brief stay with his mum. "The message he sent me was so lovely," he says. "It was only when I looked at his reviews for other places he'd stayed that I saw one of them said he'd 'literally left shit and blood all over the bathroom'." "I didn't let him book," Martin says.

A lot of people have stories of "screamers" staying. People like to get some action on holiday and they're certainly not put off just because they're doing the deed in someone else's sheets. Martin tells me of one couple who screamed the place down for three nights. I had a woman stay with her boyfriend, and they bonked so loudly that my neighbours called to complain that it sounded like a seal being clubbed to death.

Still, that wasn't as bad as the sweet-looking student who rented my place for a week while I went on another holiday. I handed over my keys and showed her how the shower worked while she raved about my beautiful taste, then left her to it while I headed to Ibiza for a week. But when I was away, the neighbours started sending concerned messages asking if she was a prostitute because of the number of random men they saw coming and going from my door during the night.

To be fair, she was less trouble than the lady who left a giant pink sex toy in my sheets or another couple who were so enthusiastic they broke my bed. And none of them come close to the experience a friend of mine had. She lists the spare room of her two-bedroom London flat on Airbnb to help her pay the rent. Once she rented it to a guy from Paris, then headed out for the night. He seemed to assume she wasn't coming back that evening, so was stunned when she walked in on him in flagrante with a sex worker on her sofa in the living room. Worst of all, he'd booked the room for a month and insisted on staying the whole time.

> Neighbours said it sounded like a seal being clubbed to death

I often came home to find "evidence" of parties — recycling bins piled high with bottles, suspicious piles of freshly washed ashtrays and glasses — but, luckily, no damage. To his credit, even the rock star, who might well have partied like a Rolling Stone, cleaned like Mrs Hinch. Not all my friends have been so lucky. One friend had a girl stay in her flat who spilt red wine on the carpet and left iron marks on the floor. When she threatened to charge her, the guest simply refused to leave or hand over the keys.

Still, the funniest story I heard was of a person who was supposedly invited to a "wild" party across London. When she arrived, she discovered to her horror that the venue was her own rented-out Airbnb flat.

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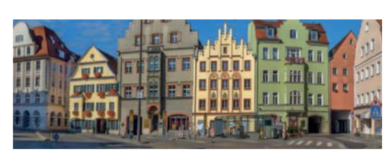


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TIMES PHOTOGRAPHER RICHARD POHLE


Rebecca Fogg

There was a spray of blood on the wall. It was mine

Rebecca Fogg was a high-flyer for American Express when she nearly died after a freak explosion at home. She tells Julia Llewellyn Smith how it changed her

When Rebecca Fogg enters the lobby of a London hotel and reaches out her right hand to shake mine, to my surprise her grasp is particularly firm. This, after all, is a woman who in 2006 almost lost that hand in a freak accident when the lavatory in her Manhattan home exploded, sending a sharp chunk of porcelain through her right wrist.

It was after 3am and Fogg, then 39 and a Harvard Business School graduate who'd just been promoted to vice-president at American Express, had been staying up perfecting a presentation. She went to brush her teeth but the tap wasn't working, so she flushed the toilet to see if there was water. "I heard this loud noise and everything changed," she says.

The lavatory, a pressure appliance as in many New York apartment buildings, exploded — its water pressure having dropped and air pressure risen unacceptably high. The bowl became a bomb, exploding with such force it dented the high ceiling and blasted tiles from the wall.

"I became immediately disoriented. There was a tiny spray of blood on the wall, but instead of connecting the dots I'm thinking, 'Oh, that's weird. I guess that's mine. Did I stub my toe?'" Then Fogg looked at her wrist and saw a 3.5in square open wound.

"There was deep, deep, deep black red blood gurgling. Just a mess of stuff. At first I thought it was someone else's arm, then came the identification it was mine. I put it together, 'This is bad.' There's nobody here to save you. If you don't do something, you could die." As Fogg staggered to the phone, the realisation hit her. "The life I've been living is now over. The next one, however long it lasts, begins now."

Nearly two decades on, Fogg, 56, has written a memoir, *Beautiful Trauma*, that outlines how the brain and body respond to such random traumas and how "the next life" she foresaw in that moment of high drama panned out.

She was neither frightened nor in pain, the adrenaline of the crisis having morphed her into "a hypervigilant animal bent on survival". She called 911, as her hand — "a blood hose" — sprayed the flat. As she spoke to the operator, she lurched around, grabbing a filthy dish towel, then another, then two more, before the wound was staunched.

Dressed only in a flimsy nightie, she stumbled into the hall to wake her neighbours so they'd let paramedics into the building. "Then I dropped to the floor and got sucked into this vacuum of terror like I've never experienced. Until that point I couldn't allow myself to feel fear because I had to rescue myself. And it was only when I got to hospital that my brain began to allow itself to feel pain."

At Brooklyn's Bellevue hospital she learnt that she'd suffered a "partial amputation" with her major artery and nerve and numerous tendons enabling finger contractions, severed in her wrist. She had a 3.5-hour operation to reconnect the tendons, and spent weeks in "a fog of shock", with no idea if her hand would stay "a block of wood".

Fogg only managed practically with the help of family, then friends, who helped her with now near-impossible tasks such as cooking and dressing. Physically and emotionally shattered, she would walk most days to a nearby bench for a private crying fit that felt "like vomiting — involuntary, mindless and often a release".

Needing to make sense of her ordeal, Fogg learnt everything she could about the hand's anatomy, which helped her to understand that while occupational therapy exercises appeared to show no benefit, in fact they were helping her vital nerve to regrow at the rate of 1mm a week.

She contacted an old friend who had almost lost a hand and an arm in an accident for advice. "You're lucky this happened to you… you're going to learn and experience things that you couldn't any other way," he told her.

If I'd been deprived of a hand, I'd not have welcomed such a Hallmark card response. Fogg, who's tall, striking and thoughtful, laughs. "It would be cruel and ignorant to say that there's a silver lining to everything. But he was absolutely right. There are many incredible things that happened to me as a result of my accident that just wouldn't have happened otherwise."

Chief among them was a complete career rethink. In the five months she took off work, Fogg realised she was dreading returning — the professional drive that had defined her life had vanished. "I just thought, 'How can I ever care about anything, other than I'm alive? Everything else is petty.' Thank God you get over that because it's a pretty bad way to spend the time but — as with many people after 9/11 — this was my wake-up call."

Even before the accident, Fogg was at a crossroads. About to turn 40, she was single and with no children, while many of her friends were marrying and starting families. "I was very happy for [them], but I was becoming unhappy my life wasn't going in the same direction, there was a sense of bereavement. After the accident I just felt freer. I'd saved my own life and I didn't want to waste my second life."

She found a job in London, and has lived there ever since: working, writing her book and volunteering for the Air Ambulance. "I was in heaven there, surrounded by people who could live fully even knowing the fragility of life."

Today, only a faint scar along Fogg's wrist and crinkling skin when she flexes her hand — "tethering from where the scar tissue has glued the tendons to my wrist" — gives any hint that anything happened.

The downsides are less visible. Her regenerated nerve sends "confused messages" back to her brain, meaning if there's discomfort in her hands or fingers, such as from a hangnail, the entire area will be painful. Her brain is slow to pick up on stimuli — so, for example, it takes a while for her to realise she's touching something very sharp or hot — earning her the nickname "asbestos hands". She has no sensory awareness of anything thin or light, making it easy to drop and lose things such as passports. Once she accidentally grabbed a stranger's knee on the Tube because she had such a weak connection from hand to brain to inform her what she was touching. As for texture: "everything feels like sandpaper". She can't easily tie shoelaces and when it comes to sex she has realised "how much fine dexterity is involved". Yet in lockdown she was able to draw on her student violin skills to master the fiddle.

To anyone who's the victim of a sudden trauma, Fogg would advise to unashamedly demand help. "'Strength' and 'courage' and doing everything by yourself is overrated." She also urges "finding a sense of purpose — reading a couple of pages of a book every day, buying a plant and watching it flower. Something that moves forward, that you can participate in when everything else is going so slowly."

And how should friends and family treat a trauma victim? After her accident Fogg was deeply touched by how some rallied, and disappointed in how others virtually disappeared. Meanwhile, she was moved to tears by the actions of complete strangers. "They'd say the right words at the right time and that would carry me for two days. Small kindnesses matter."

Fogg didn't sue her landlord, having no case since inspectors found no fault in the plumbing, but she received compensation from the building's insurance policy. Even in hospital, she joked about the undignified nature of her maiming. "There've been so many conversations about how can we make the accident sound better — a shark bite, rescuing someone from a burning house! But knowing my accident was not preventable made recovery much easier."

All in all, the accident disabused her of the notion that if we work hard, good things will come. "Before my energy was much more about, 'It's up to you to make sure nothing goes wrong.' Now I know you can't protect yourself from being human, there's a limit to how much you can hustle. Ultimately you have to just throw up your hands and see how life plays out."

***Beautiful Trauma: A Journey of Discovery in Science and Healing* by Rebecca Fogg is published by Granta on April 6 at £14.99**

arts

Confessions of a Dungeons & Dragons fan



As the new film Honour Among Thieves comes to cinemas, Joshua Lamb explains why, like Hollywood, he became totally obsessed with the fantasy game

Vicious goblins armed to the teeth with blades surround me in a dingy cave, baying for my blood. Wounds from an earlier clash with a troll prevent me from ripping these creatures apart. So I do what anyone in this scenario would — I scoff a handful of Doritos and consult with Nieves, the 4ft owl on my right who has left her job as an accountant behind for the evening. Stumped, we turn to Tassarion, a software engineer by day and a wizard with enchanting abilities by night.

By now, you could be forgiven for thinking this is a description of a dodgy night on the town at Halloween. In fact, it's a common situation I find myself in when playing Dungeons & Dragons (D&D), the tabletop fantasy role-playing game (RPG) that utilises dice, pen and paper and the depths of your imagination.

According to Wizards of the Coast, the company that owns the game, D&D has now amassed a high of 50 million players worldwide and so it was inevitable that Hollywood, which rarely fails to capitalise on something hot, would come calling again. *Dungeons & Dragons: Honour Among Thieves* hits cinemas tomorrow with a stellar cast including Chris Pine and Michelle Rodriguez. Even Hugh Grant has been roped in. D&D's popularity spike can be credited to the ways in which it has entered the wider public consciousness in recent years. In the TV show *Stranger Things*, for example, the main characters can often be seen playing it, while merchandise is readily available in stores like HMV (remember those?). In addition, celebrities, including the actors Vin Diesel and Joe Manganiello, and Rage Against the Machine guitarist Tom Morello, have been positively vocal about it for years now.

It's a game whose nerdy reputation precedes it. Since I've been playing and following it, I've been struck by just how misunderstood D&D remains. Created by the American duo of Gary Gygax and David Arneson in 1974, D&D has often been banished to the underground realms of geek culture. It was even caught up in the Satanic panic of the 1980s, a moral hysteria that began in America —



Finn Wolfhard, Caleb McLaughlin and Noah Schnapp play Dungeons & Dragons in Stranger Things

some players were considered devil-worshippers and cult leaders. While it is long since past that phase, ask most people about it and they will dismissively tell you it is a game where nerds throw dice and play make-believe. And therefore I should clarify that I don't play it in my mum's basement (she doesn't have one), I don't actually wear that sword and helmet when I play and, unbelievably, I am married.

In essence, D&D is a group storytelling game led by a Dungeon Master (DM), who outlines the overarching plot and sets the group quests. How they choose to deal with challenges is left to them and so the possibilities are truly endless. Dice are used to determine the outcomes of combat and other situations, and players often role-play in the first person when interacting with their fellow characters. The DM acts as all the non-player characters (NPCs) met along the way, as well as myriad monsters, including dragons and vampires.

However, D&D offers players so much more than what common perception dictates. It is a rich and fulfilling game with an array of benefits that makes it a deeper experience than many other hobbies, and it seems people are finally cottoning on to that — I certainly did swiftly when I began playing several years ago.

As a kid, I gorged upon fantasy literature and movies, so I was always going to end up playing D&D. However, the game's reputation filled me with apprehension at what to expect when I first found a local group needing players in London. On top of that, group environments have always

> **I was a half-man, half-dragon beast with a propensity for getting in bar fights**

been unsettling for me — I end up feeling like Mr Blobby at a jam with Led Zeppelin. My apprehension turned to nerves — what if they didn't like me? And so I trained for that first session like Arnold Schwarzenegger prepping for a Mr Universe competition. I studied the rules by watching others online, bought flashy dice and, as is the custom, made a character from scratch. I allowed my imagination to vomit and ended up with a dragon-born warrior, a half-man, half-dragon beast with a propensity for getting in bar fights. I even named him Deckard after Harrison Ford's character in *Blade Runner*.

Ben Riggs, 44, the author of the book *Slaying the Dragon: A Secret History of Dungeons & Dragons*, says that watching others play the game on the internet is the best way to learn and is a contributory factor to the game's growth. He adds that the negative side of social media is also responsible for an uptake in D&D players because online abuse has left people yearning for a human connection. "I guess we didn't realise the intoxicating power of anonymity and how it would free us to be our worst selves," he says. "I think D&D may be one of the few modern innovations that instead of pulling people apart, actually pushes them together."

Riggs isn't wrong. When I arrived that first night, it dawned on me that I might be expected to use a different voice when in character, something I had seen others do — I hadn't thought that through when I'd chosen a bloody dragon. Overcome with shyness and

GEMMA DAY FOR THE TIMES





Left: Joshua Lamb. Above: Justice Smith and Chris Pine in the D&D film

anticipating a voice like Phil Mitchell in *EastEnders* by night's end (fire burns the throat, after all), I went with more Lockets in my pockets than dice.

However, I was surprised by just how welcoming and non-expectant the group was, considering I was a rookie. This is something that has been a constant everywhere I've played the game. The team-based nature of D&D, whereby we are all fighting towards the same goal, means that you build an instant bond with your group through shared experiences and teamwork. As a result, it's like a fast-track to human connection and camaraderie.

The players were mixed too. We were from different parts of the world, and with different careers, some of us introverted and some extroverted, but through D&D we all clicked immediately. We cheered our dice rolls like we'd scored a World Cup-winning goal — a high-roller can be adrenaline-inducing and I've frequently had to fight the temptation to knee-slide through the board game café I now play in, shirt over my head with the full three-pack of moobs and stomach out. Plus I've never had to put on a different voice, which is fortunate as it would probably land somewhere between Danny Dyer and Gollum.

And I'm not alone in my experiences. Friendship has been a fundamental driver in sustaining the 55-year-old history professor Robert Wardhaugh's game, which has lasted for 41 years, making it the longest continual campaign of D&D.

From his home in London, Ontario, Wardhaugh sits in front of a mammoth wall of books and explains that he hates losing friends and so has developed what he calls the best game of D&D in the world to ensure relationships have lasted. "I realised that the game gave me a rare, unique conduit to friendship," he says, adding that you can now chart his life by taking a look at the people around his gaming table.

The pandemic and a house move left me searching for a new group but surprisingly, for a game with 50 million players, it can be hard to find them. Attempting to sniff out fellow enthusiasts in regular social groups can be like speaking code as a wartime spy.

I started out by commenting on mainstream geekery like Marvel movies, then elevated it to the *Star Wars* convention I was attending (but left out the R2-D2 costume I was planning to squeeze into) and, finally, dropped the D&D bomb. Cue a whiplash-inducing recoil that made it seem as if I'd revealed that I hate kittens (I do not). Eventually, however, someone bit and I found a new group.

Fundamentally, D&D is escapist fun but this new group has shown me just how truly immersive it can be, differentiating it from other games I've played. My current DM uses models of terrain such as caves and has even built a light-up campfire. Depending on the in-game situation, sound effects and music are even used. Although this may sound incredibly nerdy, is it really any different from theatre, movie-making or experiences like the ever-popular escape rooms? It means that for the few hours a fortnight I dive in, not a single thought crosses my mind about finances, deadlines or who's walking the dog. Fighting hordes of evil goblins is often easier than adulting.

It also offers players agency in a way that can exceed that offered by video games, while creating a narrative together is akin to writing a novel. Making your own character allows you to experiment with elements of your own personality and can sometimes hold a mirror to your flaws. Apparently I'm more afraid of conflict than I realise — someone could smack me in the face for something random and, like a classic Brit, I'd apologise and offer to buy them a coffee. In the game, I have a chance to work on that as another character and it makes me more confident as a result.

> **It reminds us how a small group of people can change the world**

Dr Megan Connell, a psychologist from North Carolina, has been practising for 12 years and takes this a step further by using RPGs in therapy, as she says their agency is a perfect way to teach someone problem-solving skills. "With a physical thing like Lego, you can almost build anything but how you build it is going to be limited by how the bricks were made. In tabletop gaming, there is no limit. So get creative, get weird and think about how you want to solve this problem," she says.

D&D is an expansive and enchanting game that combines the art of storytelling, the skill of acting and the agency of video games into a neat package that eases stress, educates and offers you lifelong friendships, making it more than just another nerdy board game. Connell echoes the sentiment.

"We've had a lot of dark times recently and I think one of the most powerful things about tabletop role-playing games is that it reminds us how a small group of people can really change the world," she says. "Through decisive action, taking risks and going out beyond your comfort zone, you can change the world and you have incredible power, you just have to be willing to use it."

Dungeons & Dragons: Honour Among Thieves **is in cinemas from tomorrow**

Theatre audiences do behave badly, but it's a two-way street by Clive Davis

So far, I've been lucky. I haven't witnessed a punch-up between neighbours and, as far as I recall, nobody has had to be thrown out of a play I've been reviewing. Most of the performances I go to are press nights, where you can be fairly sure that a good proportion of the audience is made up of friends and supporters. Still, I'm not surprised to hear that in a survey for the trade union Bectu almost half of UK theatre staff say they've considered leaving the industry due to poor behaviour by the public.

I've certainly seen my share of low-grade annoyances. At *A Streetcar Named Desire*, the man across the aisle decided that the best way to respond to Blanche's emotional meltdown was to start munching his way through a bag of sweets. Then, at the dark production of the Tony award-winning Broadway production of *Oklahoma!*, currently running at Wyndham's Theatre in London, my neighbour began checking his phone as soon as the show started and carried on every few minutes. I shot him irritated glances to no effect. The obvious thing to do, I suppose, would have been to be blunt and tap him on the knee. Then again, I have a very short fuse and I could imagine the headline: "Times critic thrown out of theatre after brawl."

Still, if I've been relatively lucky, there have been enough news reports to make it clear that audience antics are getting worse. And it's not just a British problem. In December, a Broadway performance of *Death of a Salesman* had to be paused when a woman in the audience began heckling the actors. Weirder still, last week there were reports that someone — not for the first time, apparently — defecated in a seat at the musical *Some Like it Hot*. (No puns, please.)

My opposite number at the Guardian, Arifa Akbar, has argued that the controversy about audience behaviour is partly an expression of class snobbery. I think it's more about our increasing tendency to live our lives in bubbles. You see the same weird disregard of other people in the way passengers on trains and buses routinely play videos on their phones with the volume turned up.

One of the main culprits too — surprise, surprise — seems to be booze. Punters increasingly expect to be able to carry on drinking throughout performances. At one of the West End's must-see shows, *Shirley Valentine*, for instance, quite a few couples around me cracked open bottles of fizz. In these post-Covid times, as theatres struggle to win back audiences, alcohol sales have become an even more important way of supplementing income. Jukebox musicals are particularly prone to attracting rowdy types. Not surprisingly, the country's largest theatre group, Ambassador Theatre Group, announced that it would be toning down advertising in the hope that behaviour will improve. Apparently, phrases like "best party in town" were being taken too literally.

I can't help wondering if the price of tickets has something to do with it. Could it be that people who pay ridiculous sums to see a West End production feel entitled to do what they like? At the same time, going to the theatre has increasingly acquired a cattle market atmosphere. One of my acquaintances recently emailed me about her recent expedition to the West End: "The whole theatre experience was marred by queuing in the rain to get through the doors, with 'bouncers' barking at us to 'open our bags ready to be checked, have our tickets ready and not to expect to be able to sit down late or leave our seats for 90 minutes, as we'd be barred from re-entering'. And only one ladies' WC, which, as the two-minute bell sounded to warn us to take our seats, meant that five of us were unbuttoning our trousers in the queue in anticipation of getting into the stall, simply to speed up the process."

It's all becoming a bit like a Ryanair flight. Fasten your seat belts.

HELEN MURRAY



Sheridan Smith in Shirley Valentine, where the audience cracked open fizz

times2

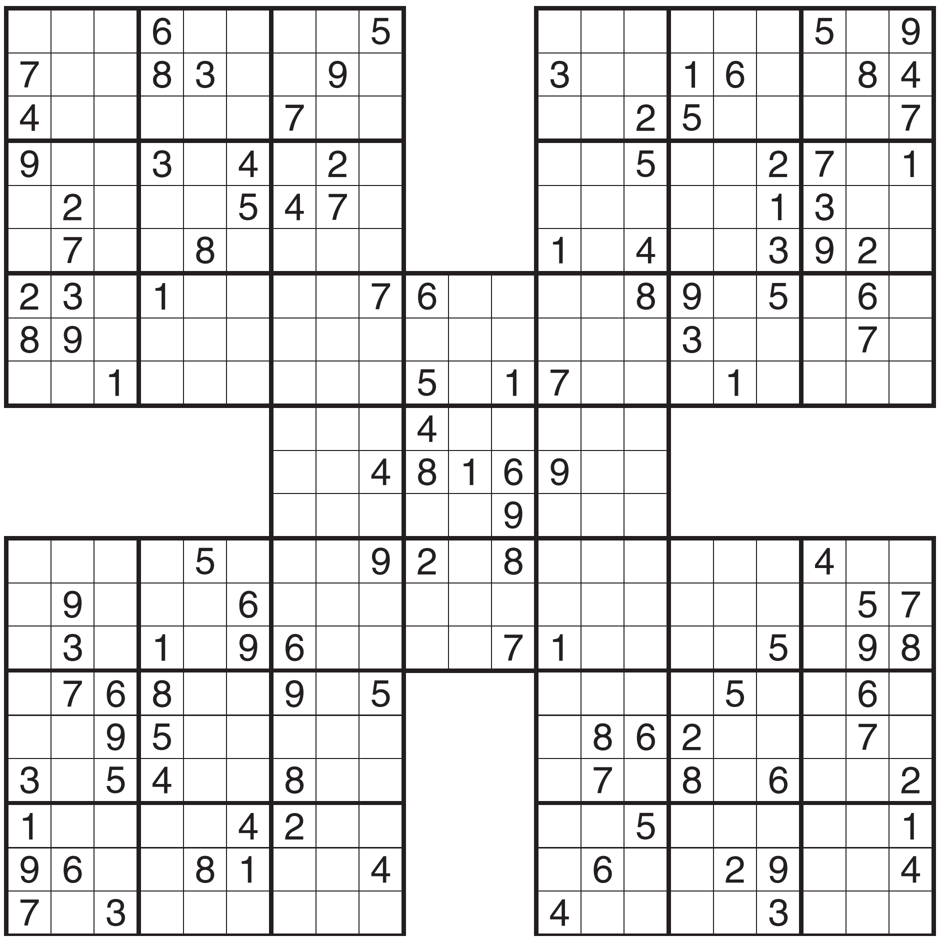
Your weekday brain boost

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Samurai medium

Fill each grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. Where the puzzles overlap, the rows and columns do not go beyond their usual length.



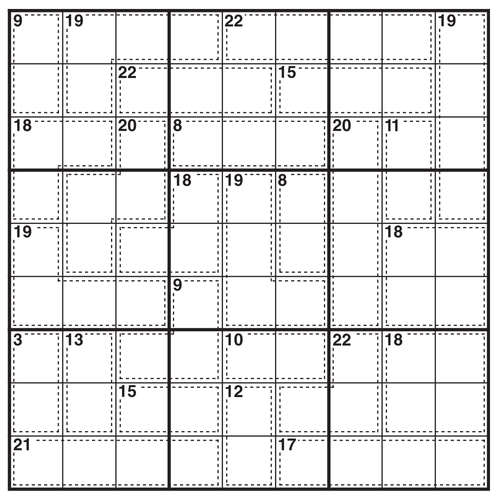
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Sudoku difficult

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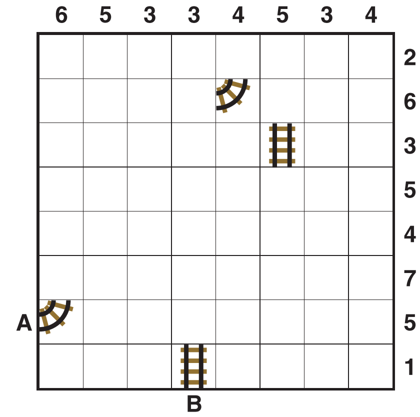
Killer deadly

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. Each set of cells joined by dotted lines must add up to the target number in its top-left corner. Within each set of cells joined by dotted lines, a digit cannot be repeated.



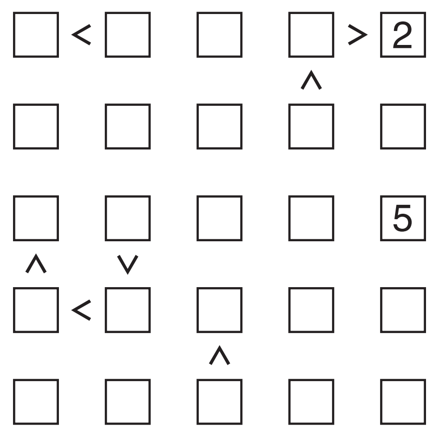
Train Tracks

Lay tracks to enable the train to travel from village A to village B. The numbers indicate how many sections of rail go in each row and column. There are only straight rails and curved rails. The track cannot cross itself.

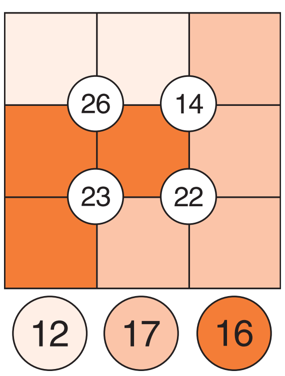


Futoshiki

Fill the blank squares so that every row and column contains each of the numbers 1 to 5 once only. The symbols between the squares indicate whether a number is larger (>) or smaller (<) than the number next to it.



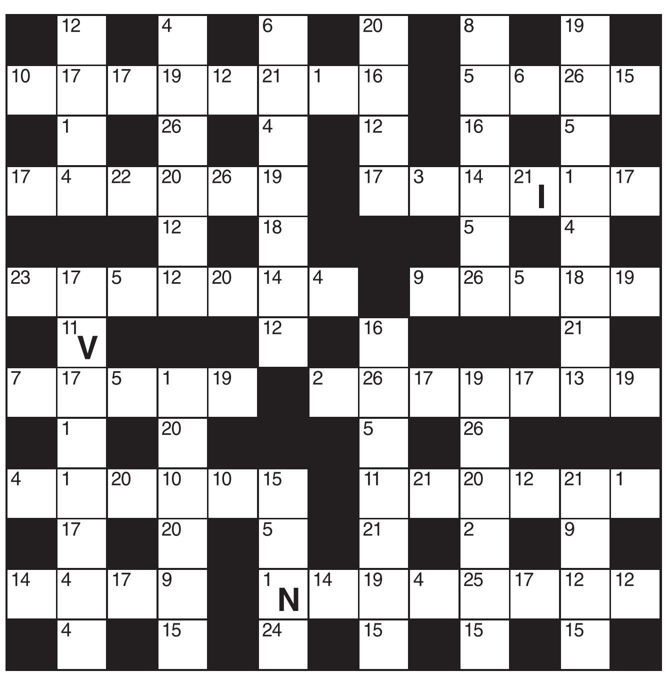
Suko



Place the numbers 1 to 9 in the spaces so that the number in each circle is equal to the sum of the four surrounding spaces, and each colour total is correct

Codeword

Every letter in the crossword-style grid, right, has been substituted for a number from 1 to 26. Each letter of the alphabet appears in the grid at least once. Use the letters already provided to work out the identity of further letters. Enter letters in the main grid and the smaller reference grid until all 26 letters of the alphabet have been accounted for. Proper nouns are excluded.



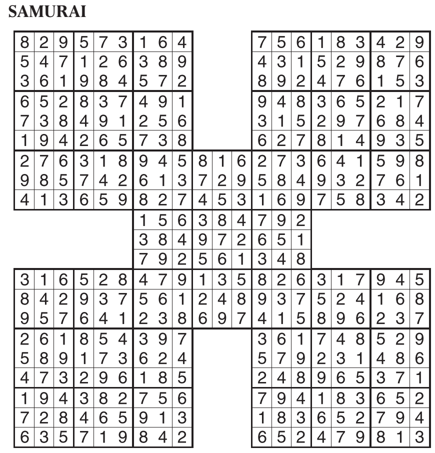
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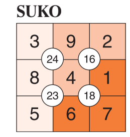
Mini Sudoku here in Brain Boost from Monday

Yesterday's solutions

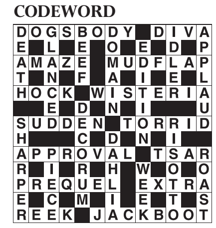
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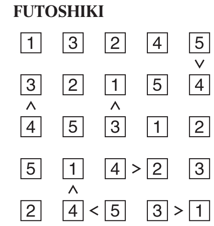
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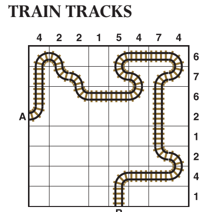
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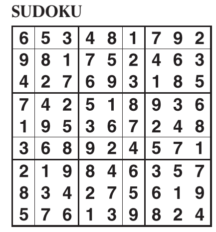
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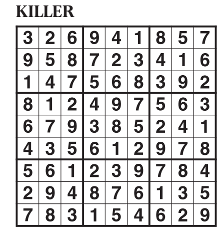
TRAIN TRACKS



SUDOKU



KILLER



A dose of Aussie humour helps wellness comedy

Carol Midgley
TV review



Wellmania
Netflix
★★★☆☆

The Big Door Prize
Apple TV+
★★★☆☆

The "wellness" industry was ripe for satire long before Gwyneth Paltrow grossed us out with her vaginal steaming and rectal ozone therapy. But **Wellmania**, despite trotting us through ludicrous detoxing, juicing, cupping and colon flushing, isn't primarily about wellness.

More its opposite. It is about the psychological make-up of its lead character Liv (a fizzing Celeste Barber), a hard-drinking, coke-snorting, casual sex-loving, self-destructive, funny but self-obsessed food writer. After collapsing during a flying visit to her home country Australia, she attempts to reverse years of partying within four weeks via quick fixes simply to get a green card for the US so she can go back and take up her dream job in New York as a TV show judge.

It reminded me slightly of Sheridan Smith's *Rosie Molloy Gives Up Everything*, though it's not *quite* as winningly filthy. It's a sort of *Fleabag*-lite crossed with *Miranda*, flitting between slapstick and darkness, such as the tragic death of Liv's father.

Parts of the script work far better than others — I'm not keen on ditzy slapstick; just a personal thing — and there is an over-reliance on fart noises (detox juices, see). Liv's friend Amy getting her neck caught up in the brown pipe that is stuck up Liv's backside felt lazy.

Yet in other areas it absolutely sparkles and carries you along, Liv regressing to a selfish teen when forced to live back with her mother for a month and telling a waiter that she is "mourning being on the arse-end side of the world". The Australian self-deprecatory humour is the best thing about this comedy, along with Barber's ebullient energy.

The Big Door Prize is about life potential and this comedy itself has the potential to become a *Black Mirror*-ish satire about what happens when you mess with people's minds by telling them what the cosmos deems them capable of. Actually, not the cosmos but a $2 machine in a grocery store that reads your handprints and produces a card that might say, for instance, "magician" or "pop legend". But it doesn't fulfil that potential.

It keeps the mood mostly upbeat and feelgood. Chris O'Dowd stars as Dusty, an amiable 40-year-old schoolteacher who rides a (non-motorised) scooter to work in smalltown Deerfield, seems slightly "beta" and has only ever slept with one woman, his wife Cass (Gabrielle Dennis). And it's a bit schmaltzy.

However, it is a pleasant watch and also a thought-provoking one because it asks whether people are happier knowing about their latent possibilities or if it's better you remain ignorant and content with your lot. Given the queues that form outside the grocery store, people are hungry to know. With jolly vibes of *Ted Lasso*, although Dusty is not as interesting a character as Ted IMO, it touches on darkness but brings the viewer back towards the light with decent one-liners.

Based on the novel by MO Walsh, it has an interesting premise and some well-drawn characters (O'Dowd is the biggest pull). But I'd love to see how it would have turned out in Charlie Brooker's hands.

LISA TOMASETTI/NETFLIX



Celeste Barber plays Liv, a writer on a four-week fitness drive

Radio choice
Ben Dowell



In Our Time
Radio 4, 9am

***A Room of One's Own*, Virginia Woolf's 1929 examination of the social and financial pressures faced by women wanting to express themselves, is the subject today on what is still the best programme on the radio. Melvyn Bragg's guests are Hermione Lee, the literary critic, academic and writer of a 1996 biography of Woolf, *above*; Alexandra Harris, professorial fellow at the University of Birmingham and author of an introduction to the writer; and Michèle Barrett, the Woolf scholar and professor of modern literary and cultural theory in the School of English and Drama at Queen Mary, University of London.**

OUR TV NEWSLETTER
Sign up to a weekly briefing of the only shows you need to watch
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Times Radio
Digital, web, smart speaker, app
5.00am Rosie Wright with Early Breakfast **6.00** Aasmah Mir and Stig Abell with Times Radio Breakfast **10.00** Matt Chorley. An insider's guide to politics **1.00pm** Mariella Frostrup. Cultural guests and big thinkers **3.00** Jane Garvey and Fi Glover. Jane and Fi's trademark entertaining style plus live discussion of the day's news **5.00** John Pienaar with Times Radio Drive. Conversation with political and economic guests **7.00** Pienaar and Friends. Informed debate with leading figures **8.00** The Evening Edition with Kait Borsay. Engaging evening conversation **10.00** Henry Bonsu **1.00am** Stories of Our Times **1.30** Red Box **2.00** Highlights from Times Radio

Radio 2
FM: 88-90.2 MHz
6.30am The Zoe Ball Breakfast Show **9.30** Gary Davies. David Harewood chooses his Tracks of My Years **12.00** Jeremy Vine **2.00pm** Anita Rani **4.00** Sara Cox **6.30** Sara Cox's Half Wower **7.00** Jo Whiley's Shiny Happy Playlist **7.30** Jo Whiley **9.00** The Country Show with Bob Harris. Music from across the generations **10.00** Trevor Nelson's Magnificent 7. Seven of Rhythm Nation's biggest hits, uplifting tunes and essential throwbacks **10.30** Trevor Nelson's Rhythm Nation. R'n'B and soulful tunes **12.00** OJ Borg **3.00am** Sounds of the 90s with Fearne Cotton (r) **4.00** Owain Wyn Evans

Radio 3
FM: 90.2-92.4 MHz
6.30am Breakfast
Hannah French presents Radio 3's classical breakfast show, featuring listener requests
9.00 Essential Classics
Georgia Mann plays the best in classical music, featuring new discoveries, musical surprises and plenty of familiar favourites
12.00 Composer of the Week: Rachmaninov (1873-1943)
Rachmaninov builds a new home in Switzerland, on the shores of Lake Lucerne, which tries to recreate aspects of the Russian home he had to leave behind. This is the most settled period of his exile but it is only five years until he moves on again to escape another war in Europe. Mendelssohn/transcr. Rachmaninov (*A Midsummer Night's Dream* — Scherzo; Symphony No 3 — Mvt 2; *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* — Excerpt; and *Isle of the Dead*)
1.00pm Radio 3 Lunchtime Concert
Schubert's reflective *"Rosamunde"* Quartet is at the heart of the Aris Quartet's recital, given as part of the Barber Series featuring New Generation Artists past and present at the University of Birmingham. The series follows the theme of "journeys" and today features a newly commissioned work from John Woolrich. Introduced by Andrew McGregor. Schulhoff (Five pieces for string quartet); John Woolrich (*Another Journey Calls* from *The Book Of Inventions* — premiere); and Schubert (String Quartet No. 13 in A-minor *"Rosamunde"*)
2.00 Afternoon Concert
Ian Skelly presents a week of *Afternoon Concert* featuring recent recordings by the Royal Concertgebouw, including today music by Julius Röntgen. There is Bach inspired music by Berg and Gubaidulina, and the BBC National Orchestra of Wales's Schumann focus continues with his Symphony no.3, the *"Rhenish"*. Plus vocal music from Vox Luminis. Julius Röntgen (*Con moto e con delicatezza* from *Symphonietta humoristica*); Berg (Violin Concerto); Sofia Gubaidulina (*Reflections on the theme B-A-C-H*); Chopin (Barcarolle, Op.60); Schumann (Symphony no.3 in E flat, Op.97 *Rhenish*); Kerll (*Missa pro decunctis*); and Shostakovich (Cello Concerto No. 1 in E flat, Op.107)
5.00 In Tune
Music and arts news
7.00 Classical Mixtape
Take time out with a 30-minute soundscape of classical favourites mixed with jazz, folk and music from around the world
7.30 Radio 3 in Concert
John Storgards conducts the BBC Philharmonic in Shostakovich and Rachmaninov. The cellist Nicolas Altstaedt joins them for Tchaikovsky's sparkling *Rococo Variations*. Rachmaninov (*The Isle of the Dead*); Tchaikovsky (*Rococo Variations*); and Shostakovich (Symphony No 15)
10.00 Free Thinking
Matthew Sweet and guests discuss Dziga Vertov's film *Man with a Movie Camera*
10.45 The Essay — Re:Cycling
Andrew Martin discovers the delights of the Derbyshire countryside along a tranquil enticing cycle path
11.00 The Night Tracks Mix
Sara Mohr-Pietsch with a magical sonic journey for late-night listening
11.30 Unclassified
Elizabeth Alker shares some of her favourite dream-inspired tracks from ambient and electronic realms (r)
12.30am Through the Night

Radio 4
FM: 92.4-94.6 MHz LW: 198kHz MW: 720 kHz
5.30am News Briefing
5.43 Prayer for the Day
5.45 Farming Today
5.58 Tweet of the Day (r)
6.00 Today
With Martha Kearney and Nick Robinson
8.31 (LW) Yesterday in Parliament
9.00 In Our Time
Discussing Virginia Woolf's essay *A Room of One's Own*. **See Radio Choice**
9.45 (LW) Daily Service
9.45 Book of the Week: Humanly Possible
By Sarah Bakewell (4/5)
10.00 Woman's Hour
Magazine presented by Anita Rani
11.00 From Our Own Correspondent
Reports from across the globe (9/9)
11.30 Arthur Briggs — The Brit Who Brought Jazz to Europe
Profile of the celebrated jazz trumpeter
12.01pm (LW) Shipping Forecast
12.04 You and Yours
12.30 Sliced Bread
The scientific evidence behind a product's bold claims. Last in the series
1.00 The World at One
1.45 Rental Health: Solutions
In Barcelona, the landscape for public housing is currently being transformed (4/5)
2.00 The Archers (r)
2.15 Drama: Passenger List
By John Scott Dryden. A perfume bottle reveals the truth about flight 702 (6/6) (r)
3.00 Ramblings
Exploring Great Alne Park retirement village in Warwickshire. Last in the series
3.27 Radio 4 Appeal
On behalf of Amref Health Africa UK (r)
3.30 Open Book
The writing of Javier Marías (r)
4.00 The Infinite Monkey Cage
Finding out about the materials that we could not live without. Last in the series (r)
4.30 BBC Inside Science
The latest scientific research
5.00 PM
5.54 (LW) Shipping Forecast
6.00 Six O'Clock News
6.30 Meet David Sedaris
The humorist reads his essay *Sweet Land of Liberty* and a recent diary extract (6/6)
7.00 The Archers
Jim grills David for some key information, and Brian is being mysterious
7.15 Front Row
A review of *God's Creatures*
8.00 Law in Action
Legal developments. Last in the series (r)
8.30 Rental Health: All Work and No Homes
The housing crisis striking communities in the Scottish Highlands (r)
9.00 BBC Inside Science
The latest scientific research (r)
9.30 In Our Time
With Melvyn Bragg (r)
10.00 The World Tonight
News round-up with Mark Urban
10.45 Book at Bedtime: How One Becomes Lonely
By Luke Sutherland (4/5) (r)
11.00 My Teenage Diary
The comedian Ken Cheng leafs through the pages of his childhood diary (2/6) (r)
11.30 Today in Parliament
Political round-up
12.00 News and Weather
12.30am Book of the Week: Humanly Possible (r)
12.48 Shipping Forecast
1.00 As BBC World Service

Radio 4 Extra
Digital only
8.00am The Burkiss Way **8.30** The World As We Know It **9.00** The Unbelievable Truth **9.30** Clare in the Community **10.00** Blithe Spy **11.00** The Sand Leopard **11.30** Lord of Misrule **12.00** Sweet Sorrow **12.15pm** Flying Visits **12.30** On the Rocks **1.00** The Burkiss Way **1.30** The World As We Know It **2.00** The Unbelievable Truth **2.30** Clare in the Community **3.00** Blithe Spy **4.00** The Sand Leopard **4.30** Lord of Misrule **5.00** Sweet Sorrow **5.15** Flying Visits **5.30** On the Rocks **6.00** The Burkiss Way. Comedy sketches with Jo Kendall **6.30** The World As We Know It. The survivors ponder continuing the human race **7.00** The Unbelievable Truth. With Holly Walsh, Henning Wehn, Tony Hawks and Sally Phillips **7.30** Clare in the Community. Clare organises a charity benefit. Originally broadcast in 2009. Last in the series **8.00** Steve Penk's Radio Nightmares. Steve Penk digs out the funniest live radio bloopers from the BBC Archive **9.00** Great Lives. Fiona Reynolds profiles Beatrix Potter **9.30** The Ice Princess. Thriller, by Camilla Lackberg **10.00** Comedy Club: Meet David Sedaris. The humorist reads his essays *My Corona* and *A Better Place* **10.30** Radio Five. Music and comedy with Eric Idle. From 1973 **11.30** Richard Herring's Objective. The comedian invites Alexei Sayle to discuss old school ties. Last in the series

Radio 5 Live
MW: 693, 909
5.00am Wake Up to Money **6.00** 5 Live Breakfast **9.00** Nicky Campbell **11.00** Adrian Chiles **1.00pm** Nihal Arthanayake **4.00** 5 Live Drive **7.00** 5 Live Sport **8.00** 5 Live Sport: Chelsea Women v Lyon Feminines (Kick-off **8.00**). The Women's Champions League quarter-final second-leg match **10.30** Colin Murray **1.00am** Qasa Alom

talkSPORT
MW: 1053, 1089 kHz
5.00am Early Breakfast **6.00** talkSPORT Breakfast with Alan Brazil **10.00** Jim White and Simon Jordan **1.00pm** Hawksbee and Baker **4.00** talkSPORT Drive **7.00** Kick Off **10.00** Sports Bar **1.00am** Extra Time

TalkRadio
Digital only
5.00am James Max **6.30** The Julia Hartley-Brewer Breakfast Show **10.00** The Independent Republic of Mike Graham **1.00pm** Ian Collins **4.00** Vanessa Feltz **7.00** Jeremy Kyle **8.00** Piers Morgan Uncensored **9.00** The Talk **10.00** Tom Newton Dunn **11.00** James Whale **1.00am** Paul Ross

6 Music
Digital only
5.00am Chris Hawkins **7.30** Lauren Laverne **10.30** Jamz Supernova **1.00pm** Craig Charles **4.00** Steve Lamacq **6.00** Steve Lamacq's Roundtable **7.00** Marc Riley **9.00** Gideon Coe **12.00** New Music Fix with Steve Lamacq **1.00am** New Music Fix with Aya **2.00** New Music Fix with Rozi Plain **3.00** New Album Fix **4.00** New Music Fix Playlist

Virgin Radio
Digital only
6.30am The Chris Evans Breakfast Show **10.00** Eddy Temple-Morris **1.00pm** Jayne Middlemiss **4.00** Ricky Wilson **7.00** Bam **10.00** Amy Voce **1.00am** My 80s Playlist with Cheryl Baker **2.00** Sean Goldsmith **4.00** Steve Denyer

Classic FM
FM: 100-102 MHz
6.00am Breakfast **9.00** Alexander Armstrong **12.00** Anne-Marie Minhall **4.00pm** John Brunning **7.00** Smooth Classics at Seven **10.00** Smooth Classics **1.00am** Bill Overton **4.00** Early Breakfast

television & radio

Viewing Guide
Joe Clay

Jason and Clara: In Memory of Maudie
ITV1, 9pm

Top pick

During Christmas 2010, Maude, the two-year-old second daughter of the actor Jason Watkins and his wife, Clara, a fashion designer and actress, got what they thought was flu. Her temperature was very high and she had a persistent cough, so they took her to A&E and Maude was given antibiotics. On New Year's Eve her symptoms were still extreme, so they took her back to hospital and the doctors told them she had croup. Treatment calmed her down and her temperature fell, so she was discharged. That night they put her to bed in the room she shared with her older sister, Bessie. "On new year's morning Bessie came in, a bit subdued, and started to play on our bed," Jason told The Sunday Times in 2017. "'I can't wake up Maude,' she said after a bit. I remember feeling a sort of dread. When I walked into their room I could see she had died." At the inquest into Maude's death it was discovered that she had sepsis, which occurs when the body overreacts to an infection and starts to damage tissues and organs, and Jason and Clara have campaigned to raise awareness of it. With the couple preparing to move from the house where Maude was born and where she died, they feel it's time to tell her story. "It's about breaking down the taboo of child loss," Clara says. "It's so grim and unspeakable, people don't know what to say." It's a moving and brave tribute to a treasured little girl.

Six Four
ITVX

Kevin McKidd, for ever frozen in time as doomed Tommy in *Trainspotting*, is excellent in this compelling four-part thriller, playing a police officer whose daughter is missing. McKidd is DC Chris O'Neill and we first meet him and his wife, Michelle (Vinette Robinson), a former undercover cop, as they identify a body. It's not their daughter and Michelle tries to take control of the situation by going to London to look for her — against Chris's wishes. Chris stays in Edinburgh, where he becomes involved in another infamous, unsolved case where a local girl went missing.

BBC1

Early

6.00am Breakfast **9.15** Morning Live. Magazine show with Gethin Jones and Helen Skelton **10.00** The Moment of Proof. A fingerprint on a getaway car number plate snares an armed robber **10.30** Animal Park Summer. A two-year-old porcupine goes missing (r) (AD) **11.15** Homes Under the Hammer. The progress of properties in Greater Manchester, south Wales and Essex (r) **12.15pm** Bargain Hunt (r) (AD) **1.00** BBC News at One; Weather **1.30** BBC Regional News; Weather **1.45** Doctors. Rob and Karen's big night out takes a shocking turn (AD) **2.15** Jay and Dom's Home Fix. Jay Blades constructs a bird bath from old crockery (r) (AD) **3.00** Escape to the Country. Margherita Taylor is in Somerset with a couple on their maiden house hunt together. While in the county, she visits a cottage that Samuel Taylor Coleridge once called home (r) (AD) **3.45** Antiques Road Trip. Raj Bisram and Charles Hanson arrive in Shrewsbury, Shropshire, where Raj finds out how a 19th-century flax mill changed city skylines around the world (r) **4.30** Bridge of Lies. Quiz show hosted by Ross Kemp (r) **5.15** Pointless. Quiz hosted by Alexander Armstrong (r) **6.00** BBC News at Six; Weather **6.30** BBC Regional News; Weather

7PM

7.00 The One Show Alex Jones, Ronan Keating and a team of roving reporters present stories from around the UK

7.30 EastEnders All hell breaks loose in No 45 as Rocky's wife turns up, and Sonia invites Reiss to visit Bangkok with her to meet Bex (AD)

8PM

8.00 Dragons' Den A surgeon turned inventor thinks he has solved a problem for parents, while low strength gin gets tastebuds tingling. An entrepreneur is on a mission to eliminate the dreaded sweat patch, and a couple pitch their children's storage baskets with a twist (AD)

9PM

9.00 Gordon Ramsay's Future Food Stars New series. The chef invites 12 of the UK's up-and-coming food and drink entrepreneurs to compete to earn a £150,000 investment — secured from Gordon's own reserves. *See Viewing Guide* (1/8) (AD)

10PM

10.00 BBC News at Ten

10.30 BBC Regional News and Weather

10.40 Question Time Fiona Bruce hosts the topical debate from Bristol, inviting a panel of politicians and other guests to answer questions from an invited audience

11PM

11.40 Newscast BBC journalists including Adam Fleming and Chris Mason host a weekly round-up from Westminster

Late

12.10am Would I Lie to You? Team captains David Mitchell and Lee Mack are joined by guests Stephen Bailey, Asim Chaudhry, Gemma Collins and Sally Lindsay, hoping to deceive their opponents with plausible lies (r) **12.40** Have I Got a Bit More News for You. Adil Ray hosts the satirical current affairs quiz (r) **1.30-6.00** BBC News

BBC2

Early

6.45am Escape to the Country (r) **7.30** The Moment of Proof (r) **8.00** Sign Zone: Paul Whitehouse: Our Troubled Rivers (r) (SL) **9.00** BBC News at 9 **10.00** BBC News **12.15pm** Politics Live **1.00** Impossible. Rick Edwards hosts the quiz (r) **1.45** Eggheads. Quiz hosted by Jeremy Vine (r) **2.15** The Hairy Bikers' Pubs That Built Britain. The duo uncover historic pubs in Manchester (r) (AD) **2.45** Celebrity Painting Challenge. Three famous faces battle it out in the final — with a *Strictly Come Dancing* twist. Last in the series (r) (AD) **3.45** My Unique B&B. Simon is in Warwickshire to turn a 200-year-old turret into a medieval-themed B&B (r) (AD) **4.15** Grizzly Bear Cubs and Me. Part one of two. Gordon Buchanan joins a pioneering family of biologists in Russia as they attempt to rehabilitate six orphaned grizzly bear cubs (r) (AD) **5.15** Flog It! Five experts assess items brought to the Blickling estate in Norfolk, while Paul Martin enjoys a ride in a tank on historic former military camp (r) **6.00** Richard Osman's House of Games. Lucy Beaumont, Shazia Mirza, Joe Thomas and Jake Wood test their skills (r) **6.30** Coast to Coast Food Festival. Sean Fletcher explores the annual Neath Food and Drink Festival

7.00 Your Home Made Perfect Two architects compete using virtual reality to win the opportunity to remodel a four-bedroom house near Stockport. Presented by Angela Scanlon (8/8) (r)

8.00 Great British Menu: The Finals The eight regional champions cook their desserts in an effort to secure the last place on the menu at the banquet. Morwenna Banks, voice of Mummy Pig on *Peppa Pig*, is the guest judge

9.00 Get on Up: The Triumph of Black America New series. David Harewood travels across America to uncover the stories behind African-American artists while meeting some of his heroes. *See Viewing Guide* (1/3) (AD)

10.00 Mock the Week A look back at some of the news of the week, with guests James Acaster, Angela Barnes, Ed Byrne and Nish Kumar (2/8) (r)

10.30 Newsnight With Victoria Derbyshire

11.15 Murder in Mayfair Reporter Nawal Al-Maghafi investigates the murder of Norwegian student Martine Vik Magnussen in 2008, who was killed in a flat near Mayfair after a night out. Al-Maghafi seeks answers from the only suspect, Farouk Abdulhak (r) (AD)

Late

12.15am Saving Lives in Leeds A cardiac surgeon finally gets to operate on her longest-waiting patient (r) (AD) **1.15** Sign Zone: Scarlett's Driving School. A single mother is desperate to learn to drive to improve the lives of her children (r) (SL) **1.45** Inside Our Autistic Minds (r) (AD, SL) **2.45-3.30** Saved and Remade (r) (SL)

ITV1

Early

6.00am Good Morning Britain **9.00** Lorraine. Entertainment, current affairs and fashion news, as well as showbiz stories and gossip. Presented by Lorraine Kelly **10.00** This Morning. Daily magazine, featuring a mix of chat, showbusiness news, lifestyle features, topical discussion, health and beauty advice and more. Including Local Weather **12.30pm** Loose Women. The women put the world to rights once more and invite a guest to chat about what they are up to **1.30** ITV News; Weather **1.55** Regional News; Weather **2.00** Dickinson's Real Deal. David Dickinson is joined in Crewe by dealers Fay Rutter, James Layte, Simon Schneider and Jo Brayshaw (AD) **3.00** Lingo. Three teams try to work out words that appear in the Lingo grids and Puzzlewords. Presented by Adil Ray (r) **4.00** Tipping Point. Ben Shephard hosts the arcade-themed quiz in which contestants drop tokens down a choice of four chutes in the hope of winning a £10,000 jackpot (r) **5.00** The Chase. Bradley Walsh presents as four contestants answer general knowledge questions and work as a team to take on one of the ruthless Chasers and secure a cash prize (r) **6.00** Regional News; Weather **6.30** ITV News; Weather

7.30 Emmerdale Billy and Dawn attend the custody court, Alex makes his move, and Paddy needs a friend (AD)

8.30 Buy Back Your Health? NHS vs Private: Tonight As record numbers have turned to private healthcare, Emily Morgan meets some of those taking action to buy back their health

9.00 Jason and Clara: In Memory of Maudie The actor Jason Watkins and his wife, Clara Francis, tell the story of their daughter, Maudie, who died of undiagnosed sepsis aged just two and a half. *See Viewing Guide* (AD)

10.00 ITV News at Ten

10.30 Regional News

10.45 The Jonathan Ross Show Adam Sandler and Jennifer Aniston talk about forthcoming comedy thriller *Murder Mystery 2*, while the host is also joined by *Succession* star Brian Cox, *His Dark Materials* actress Ruth Wilson and the comedian Greg Davies. With music by Arlo Parks (r)

11.40 All Elite Wrestling: Rampage Hard-hitting, high-flying wrestling action with many of AEW's biggest stars (r)

Late

12.35am Teleshopping 3.00 Unforgotten. Sunny and Jess get closer to the truth of what happened on the night Precious was murdered, but after an anonymous call a shocking discovery turns the case upside down. Crime drama starring Sanjeev Bhaskar (r) (AD, SL) **3.50** Unwind with ITV **5.05-6.00** Dickinson's Real Deal (r) (AD, SL)

Channel 4

Early

6.10am Countdown. Levi Roots is in Dictionary Corner (r) **6.50** 3rd Rock from the Sun (r) (AD) **7.40** The King of Queens (r) (AD) **9.00** Frasier (r) (AD) **10.30** Undercover Boss USA. The CEO of UScellular sees how his company is doing (r) **11.25** Channel 4 News Summary **11.30** Emergency Helicopter Medics. A man suffers multiple injuries after a quad-bike accident (AD) **12.30pm** Steph's Packed Lunch. Weekday magazine show hosted by Steph McGovern **2.10** Countdown. With Levi Roots **3.00** Tool Club. The team wishes to build a performance space **4.00** A New Life in the Sun. There are build problems at some holiday lets on the Costa del Sol, while organic farmers in Italy launch a new venture (r) **5.00** Four in a Bed. The guest house owners visit Dovestone Holiday Park in Saddleworth, Greater Manchester **5.30** Come Dine with Me. The penultimate host in Leamington Spa is a publican, who dons her hosting hat with a sports-inspired evening (r) **6.00** The Simpsons. Lisa takes offence at a new doll that supposedly demeans women (r) (AD) **6.30** Hollyoaks. Tony receives an unexpected call from Eric asking him to go and visit him in prison, while James and Ste's wedding planning is well underway (r) (AD)

7.00 Channel 4 News

8.00 The Dog Academy New series. A crack team of top specialist trainers instructs beleaguered owners in dog management skills and dog psychology. Among those under their charge is a ferocious cockapoo (1/8) (AD)

9.00 Taskmaster New series. Frankie Boyle, Ivo Graham, Jenny Eclair, Kiell Smith-Bynoe and Mae Martin battle to win an elaborate joust to become the 15th *Taskmaster* champion. *See Viewing Guide* (1/10) (AD)

10.00 Rise and Fall The power struggle continues in the reality contest involving a diverse group of 16 people from all walks of life taking part in a social experiment asking how wealth and power shape the way people behave toward one another. Hosted by Greg James

11.05 My Massive Ck** Men with exceptionally large penises reveal how this has affected their lives, from the embarrassment of people staring and difficulties with clothing, to uncomfortable sex and even causing injuries to their partners (r) (AD)

Late

12.05am Night Coppers (r) (AD) **1.05** Tempting Fortune (r) (AD, SL) **2.55** Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA. A restaurant in Hollywood (r) (SL) **3.45** Couples Come Dine with Me (r) **4.35** Food Unwrapped (r) (AD) **5.05** Kirstie's House of Craft (r) **5.15** Location, Location, Location (r) (SL) **5.55-6.10** 3rd Rock from the Sun (r)

Channel 5

Early

6.00am Milkshake! **9.15** Jeremy Vine. The broadcaster and guests discuss the issues of the day with co-host Storm Huntley joining him for phone-ins and reading out viewers' correspondence **12.45pm** Dogs Behaving (Very) Badly. Graeme Hall treats a rescue dog that steals food and barks at the front door — but finds the training techniques for one problem do not work quite as well with the other (r) **1.40** 5 News at Lunchtime **1.45** Home and Away. Despite Felicity's hesitation about resetting a wedding date, Tane ploughs ahead with plans. Mackenzie is affronted by Felicity's party fever (r) (AD) **2.15 FILM: The Surrogate (PG, TVM, 2023)** A woman poses as a nanny to infiltrate a famous couple's household and learn the truth about her daughter's tragic death during childbirth. Thriller starring Catherine Dyer and Luisa D'Oliveira **4.00** Bargain-Loving Brits in the Sun. Featuring a top ten guide to living in Benidorm on the cheap, before catching up with some of the big characters from the season (r) (AD) **5.00** 5 News at 5 **6.00** Cash in the Attic. Helping people make money **6.30** Eggheads. Challenging the might of the quiz goliaths today are the Fine Young Bramptonians **6.55** 5 News Update

7.00 Motorhoming Wales with Merton & Webster Paul Merton and Suki Webster explore Snowdonia and pitch up at Lake Bala, where they sample some of the watersports available, starting with paddle boarding (6/6)

7.55 5 News Update

8.00 Isle of Wight: Jewel of the South Following more of the residents who live and work on the Isle of Wight, and exploring how the locals cope with the challenges of a busy tourist season. Alan Titchmarsh narrates (5/6)

9.00 Live Vanished: The Hunt for Britain's Missing People New series. Dan Walker investigates people who have gone missing — some cases well known, others not, and each with a unique set of circumstances. Dan speaks to loved ones, families, friends, police and experts from charities

10.00 Predator: Catching the Black Cab Rapist Documentary examining the investigation into serial rapist John Worboys, who attacked more than 100 victims in his taxi between 2000 and 2008. With access to some of his victims, and the police team that finally cracked the case, this film's new analysis of the facts explains why it took years before Worboys's violent campaign of terror against women was finally brought to an end (r)

11.30 Killer at the Crime Scene A corpse found in a ditch by a dog walker kick-starts a police investigation to track down a serial killer (2/12) (r)



Are banking tremors the start of a new

The collapse of a regional bank in California has sent shock waves through the financial system and triggered a sense of déjà vu. Have we learned any lessons from the 2008 global financial crisis? And is it finally time for a banking rethink?

television & radio

Gordon Ramsay's Future Food Stars
BBC1, 9pm

The foodie version of *The Apprentice* returns, with Gordon Ramsay searching for "the UK's next food and drink entrepreneur" with that searing intensity he brings to everything he does. It's £150,000 of Ramsay's money up for grabs, but first they must pass a series of challenges. First up the 12 contestants travel to Glenapp Castle in Scotland, where they are tasked with creating a five-star banquet celebrating Scottish cuisine. Sampling their wares are the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo. Deciding who stays and who goes is Ramsay.

Get on Up: The Triumph of Black America
BBC2, 9pm

The actor David Harewood has been a fan of American culture since he was a child and in this entertaining two-part series he travels across the country to reveal some of the pioneering African-Americans who "shaped his life", from Martin Luther King and Sammy Davis Jr to Spike Lee and Stevie Wonder, as well as exploring the impact black America has had on the world. Contributors include Smokey Robinson and Nile Rodgers helping Harewood to explain what makes African-American culture so influential and distinct.

Taskmaster
Channel 4, 9pm

Just as "Little" Alex Horne must keep coming up with innovative new tasks for the contestants of *Taskmaster*, TV journalists have to keep coming up with interesting things to say about the show without just listing who is taking part and what they are doing. Safe to say that Horne is much better at his job than I am. Taking part for the 15th series are Frankie Boyle, Ivo Graham, Kiell Smith-Bynoe and Mae Martin, and tasks include organising the first dance at a wedding, unravelling a ball of string and one that involves them commandeering a barge.

Film Control
Sky Cinema Drama/ Romance, 10.25pm

The subject for Anton Corbijn's directorial debut is Ian Curtis of Joy Division. Shot in black-and-white, the film lends understated beauty to Macclesfield's backstreets, and Sam Riley uncannily evokes Curtis's tortured stage presence. (15, 2007)

Sky Max

6.00am Stargate SG-1 (r) **8.00** DC's Legends of Tomorrow (r) (AD) **9.00** Quantum Leap (r) **10.00** Supergirl (r) **11.00** NCIS: Los Angeles (r) **1.00pm** Hawaii Five-0 (r) **2.00** S.W.A.T. (r) (AD) **3.00** Quantum Leap (r) **4.00** DC's Legends of Tomorrow (r) (AD) **5.00** Supergirl (r)
6.00 Stargate SG-1. Sci-fi drama (r)
7.00 Stargate SG-1. Part one of two. A malfunction plunges Earth into jeopardy (r)
8.00 An Idiot Abroad 2. Karl Pilkington heads to Alaska, where he watches whales and takes part in a variety of other activities (r) (AD)
9.00 A Town Called Malice. Kelly does Mint Ma's secret bidding back in London
10.05 Rob & Romesh vs Ballet. Rob Beckett and Romesh Ranganathan examine the world of ballet and perform in *Swan Lake* (r) (AD)
11.05 Resident Alien. Extraterrestrial Harry struggles to get to grips with emotions (r) (AD)
12.05am NCIS: Los Angeles (r) **1.00** Road Wars (r) **3.00** Hawaii Five-0 (r) **4.00** S.W.A.T. (r) (AD) **5.00** Highway Patrol (r)

Sky Atlantic

6.00am Fish Town (r) **7.55** The Affair (r) (AD) **10.05** Gomorrah (r) **12.15pm** Game of Thrones. Jon faces a revolt (r) (AD) **1.20** Devils (r) (AD) **3.30** Gomorrah (r) **5.35** Succession (r) (AD)
6.40 Succession. The Roy family come together to attend a wedding in Italy (r) (AD)
7.50 Game of Thrones. Cersei returns a gift, and Jaime learns from his mistakes (r) (AD)
9.00 Billions. A spontaneous trip to a Metallica gig causes Axe to question his freedom. Meanwhile, Chuck must assesses his own father's business dealings. Drama starring Damian Lewis and Paul Giamatti (4/12) (r) (AD)
10.05 Billions. Axe disappears, leaving Axe Capital in temporary chaos, while Chuck uncovers some damning evidence against Axe and makes a surprising arrest (5/12) (r) (AD)
11.10 Django. To celebrate Sarah's return, John decides it is time for a masquerade ball (r)
12.15am Django (r) **1.30** Drift: Partners in Crime. German thriller starring Ken Duken (r) **3.30** In Treatment (r) **4.00** Fish Town (r)

Sky Documentaries

6.00am Veleno: The Town of Lost Children (r) **7.00** Discovering: Robert Shaw (r) (AD) **8.00** The Directors (r) (AD) **9.00** The 2000s (r) **10.00** The Vietnam War (r) **11.05** Devil's Advocate: The Mostly True Story of Giovanni Di Stefano (r) (AD) **12.00** Drew: The Man Behind the Poster (r) **2.00pm** I Am Richard Pryor (r) **3.50** My Icon: Natasha Jonas (r) (AD) **4.00** The Directors (r) (AD) **5.00** Discovering: Robert Shaw (r) (AD)
6.00 The 2000s. Technological advancements (r)
7.00 The Vietnam War (r)
8.05 Devil's Advocate: The Mostly True Story of Giovanni Di Stefano (3/3) (r) (AD)
9.00 FILM: Dogtown and Z-Boys (15, 2001) Skateboarding documentary
10.50 FILM: Bobby (PG, 2016) Celebrating Bobby Moore's footballing career (AD)
12.50am FILM: Stockton on My Mind (12, 2020) The story of Michael Tubbs, the first black mayor of his hometown **2.35** A Crime on the Bayou (r) (AD) **4.25** Premier League Legends (r) (AD) **5.00** Discovering (r) (AD)

Sky Arts

6.00am Arts Uncovered **6.10** Cirque du Soleil: Nouvelle Experience **7.40** Pavarotti: 10th Anniversary Gala **9.00** Tales of the Unexpected (AD) **10.00** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **11.00** Discovering (AD) **12.00** The Adventurers of Modern Art **1.00pm** Tales of the Unexpected (AD) **2.00** Landmark (AD) **3.00** Landscape Artist of the Year 2021 **4.00** Discovering: Vivien Leigh (AD) **5.00** Tales of the Unexpected (AD)
6.00 Alfred Hitchcock Presents
7.00 Harold Lloyd: Hollywood's Timeless Comedy Genius. The life of the silent film star
8.00 Discovering: Greta Garbo (AD)
9.00 The Directors. A profile of Ridley Scott
10.00 Icon: Music Through the Lens (AD)
11.15 Discovering: Peter Sellers (AD)
12.15am FILM: Oscar Micheaux — The Superhero of Black Film-making (2021)
2.00 Spielberg and Williams: The Adventure Continues **2.30** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **4.30** Music Icons: Doo-Wop **5.00** Music Icons: Glam Rock **5.30** Video Killed the Radio Star

Sky Main Event

6.00am Sky Sports News **7.00** Good Morning Sports Fans **10.00** Live NRL: Sydney Roosters v Parramatta Eels (Kick-off **10.00**) **12.00** Sky Sports News **1.30pm** Live PGA Tour Golf. Coverage of day one of the Valero Texas Open
6.30 Sky Sports News. The latest stories
7.00 Live Premier League Darts. The ninth night of the tournament from Mercedes-Benz Arena in Berlin with a format featuring quarter-finals, semi-finals and a final all in one night
10.45 Live PGA Tour Golf. Coverage of day one of the Valero Texas Open from TPC San Antonio
12.00 Live TNT Pre-Game Show **12.30am** Live NBA Basketball: Milwaukee Bucks v Boston Celtics (Tip-off **12.30**) **3.00** Live Formula 1. The Australian Grand Prix first practice session **3.55** Live Formula 3 Championship **4.35** Rookies Karting **4.45** Alpine Drivers Go Back to their Roots **4.55** Brazil 2008 Revisited **5.05** Force Indy: Driving Change **5.15** Lewis Hamilton: Why Heritage Matters **5.45** Live Formula 1. The Australian Grand Prix second practice session

T AUDIO

financial crisis?

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Variations

BBC1 N Ireland
As BBC1 except: 10.40pm The View **11.20** Question Time **12.20am** Newscast. A round-up from Westminster **12.50** Jerk (r) (AD) **1.20** Would I Lie to You? (r) **1.50-6.00** BBC News

BBC1 Scotland
As BBC1 except: 11.15am Bargain Hunt. From Builth Wells, Powys (r) (AD) **12.00-1.00pm** First Minister's Questions **12.40am** Jerk (r) (AD) **1.05** Jerk (r) (AD) **1.30** Weather for the Week Ahead **1.35-6.00** BBC News

BBC1 Wales
As BBC1 except: 10.30am-11.15 Animal Park Summer (r) (AD) **10.40pm** Talk Disability: Invisible Disabilities **10.45** Question Time. Topical debate from Bristol **11.45** Newscast **12.15am** Dark Land: Hunting the Killers (r) **12.55-1.25** Would I Lie to You? (r)

BBC2 N Ireland
As BBC2 except: 10.00pm-10.30 The Prime Ministers of Northern Ireland (r)

BBC2 Wales
As BBC2 except: 11.15pm New Voices from Wales: Foxy Music **11.30** New Voices from Wales: Hiraeth. Stories of five Ukrainian refugees **11.45-12.15am** Cunk on Britain (r)

ITV1 Wales
As ITV1 except: 8.30pm-9.00 Wales This Week **10.45** Buy Back Your Health? NHS Vs Private: Tonight **11.15-11.40** Coast & Country. Visiting Tretower Castle and Court (r)

STV
As ITV1 except: 8.30pm-9.00 Scotland Tonight **10.30** STV News **10.45** Buy Back Your Health? NHS Vs Private: Tonight **11.10** The Jonathan Ross Show (r) **12.05am-3.00** Teleshopping **3.50-5.05** Night Vision

UTV
As ITV1 except: 8.30pm-9.00 Rare Breed: A Farming Year. The lives of farming families **10.45** Buy Back Your Health? NHS vs Private: Tonight **11.10-11.40** On Assignment (r)

BBC Scotland
7.00pm Iain Robertson Rambles (r) **7.30** Scotland's Greatest Escape (r) **8.00** The Great Food Guys (r) (AD) **8.30** The Scandals That Shocked Scotland (r) (AD) **9.00** The Nine **10.00** Scot Squad (r) (AD) **10.30** FILM: Last Breath (2019) **11.55-12.00** Loop

BBC Alba
6.00am Alba Today **5.00pm** Piseag & Cuilean/ Kit & Pup (r) **5.05** Sionnach agus Maigheach (Fox & Hare) (r) **5.20** Shane an Chef (r) **5.30** Oscar & Ealasaid (r) **5.45** Su Pic (Peek Zoo) (r) **5.55** Stòiridh (r) **6.00** An Saoghal Droil aig Pol Ploc/The Rubbish World of Dave Spud (r) **6.10** Alba Eagalach (r) **6.20** Clann Na Cruinne (r) **6.40** Proiseact Ploigh (r) **7.00** Turas a' Bhradain (r) **7.30** SpeakGaelic (r) **8.00** An Là (News) **8.30** Na Tiristich (From Tiree with Love) (r) **9.00** Moulin Rouge Ecosse (r) **10.00** Scotland's Wild Side (r) **10.30** Tuaman Na h-Eiphit/Tombs of Egypt **11.20** Fraochy Bay (r) **11.25** Air Iomall-Music from the Edge (r) **12.00-6.00am** Alba Today

S4C
6.00am Cyw **9.10** Teulu Ni (r) **9.20** Y Diwrnod Mawr (r) **9.35** Y Brodyr Coala (r) **9.45** Gwdihw (r) **10.00** Cywion Bach (r) **10.05** Sblij a Sbloj (r) **10.15** Cymylaubychain (r) **10.25** Patrôl Pawennau (r) **10.40** Awyr Iach (r) **10.55** Og y Draenog Hapus (r) **11.05** Jamborî (r) **11.15** Misho (r) **11.25** Blero yn Mynd i Ocido (r) **11.40** Deian a Loli (r) **12.00** News; Weather **12.05pm** Sain Ffagan (r) **12.30** Heno (r) **1.00** Cymry ar Gynfas (r) **1.30** Y Byd ar Bedwar (r) **2.00** News; Weather **2.05** Prynhawn Da **3.00** News; Weather **3.05** Corau Rhys Meirion (r) (AD) **4.00** Awr Fawr: Cywion Bach (r) **4.05** Og y Draenog Hapus (r) **4.15** Gwdihw (r) **4.30** Stiw (r) **4.45** Deian a Loli (r) **5.00** Stwnsh: Cath-Od (r) **5.10** Chwarter Call (r) **5.25** Pigo dy Drwyn **5.55** Ffeil **6.00** Cheer am Byth (r) **6.30** Yn y Fan a'r Lle (r) (AD) **6.57** News **7.00** Heno **7.30** News; Weather **8.00** Pobol y Cwm (AD) **8.25** Rownd a Rownd (AD) **8.55** News; Weather **9.00** Pawb a'i Farn **10.00** Am Dro! (r) (AD) **11.00-11.35** Galw Nain Nain Nain (r)

TalkTV

6.00am James Max **6.30** The Julia Hartley-Brewer Breakfast Show **10.00** The Independent Republic of Mike Graham. The host tears his way through the morning newspapers **1.00pm** Ian Collins. Hard-hitting monologues and debates **4.00** Vanessa Feltz. The host guides you through the big stories of the day from the world of politics, current affairs and showbiz
7.00 Jeremy Kyle. The host investigates the future of Britain's Armed Forces
8.00 Piers Morgan Uncensored. The host presents his verdict on the day's global events with an hour of debate and straight-talking interviews with the world's leading figures
9.00 The Talk. Join a panel of opinionated famous faces from the worlds of politics, showbiz, business and current affairs to debate the latest topics everybody is talking about
10.00 First Edition. The flagship evening news show takes a look at tomorrow's news through the lens of the newspaper first editions
11.00 Piers Morgan Uncensored
12.00 James Whale **1.00am** Vanessa Feltz **2.00** Jeremy Kyle Live **3.00** Piers Morgan Uncensored **4.00** The Talk **5.00** James Max

BBC4

7.00pm Great Asian Railway Journeys. Michael Portillo travels around Southeast Asia
7.30 Canal Boat Diaries. Robbie Cumming explores the Victorian village of Saltaire (3/4)
8.00 Jet! When Britain Ruled the Skies. Part one of two. Examining advances in British aviation in the 1950s and 60s, beginning by exploring a new generation of military planes including the Vulcan bomber and the Meteor jet fighter
9.00 FILM: Jesus Christ Superstar (PG, 1973) Musical following the last days in the life of Jesus Christ, seen from the perspective of the disciple Judas, who is gradually tempted into betraying his friend and sending him to his death. Based on the Andrew Lloyd Webber stage show with Ted Neeley and Yvonne Elliman
10.40 Marti Webb: Tell Me on a Sunday. Concert performance of the one-woman musical show written by Andrew Lloyd Webber and Don Black
11.25 Queen Elizabeth I: A Timewatch Guide. Examining the life of Elizabeth Tudor
12.25am Great Asian Railway Journeys **12.55** Canal Boat Diaries **1.25** Restoring the Earth: The Age of Nature. A look at nature's resilience **2.20-3.20** Jet! When Britain Ruled the Skies

Talking Pictures

6.00am Honey West (b/w) **6.30 FILM: Born Of The Sea (U, 1949)** (b/w) **7.25 FILM: Danny Boy (U, 1941)** (b/w) **9.00** Black Saddle **9.30 FILM: The Great Flamarion (PG, 1945)** (b/w) **11.05 FILM: Love In Pawn (PG, 1953) 12.35pm FILM: Beware of Pity (PG, 1946)** (b/w) **2.30** Crown Court **3.00** Melvyn's Talking Pictures **3.10 FILM: You Only Live Once (12, 1937)** (b/w) **4.50** Melvyn's Talking Pictures **5.00 FILM: The Lone Wolf Strikes (U, 1940)** Comedy starring Warren William
6.20 FILM: Busy Bodies (U, 1933) Comedy starring Laurel and Hardy (b/w)
6.45 FILM: Wings of Danger (U, 1952) Crime thriller starring Zachary Scott (b/w)
8.00 The Saint. Roger Moore stars
9.00 Justice. Dr Moody starts a new job
10.00 FILM: Walk East On Beacon! (U, 1952) Spy thriller with George Murphy (b/w)
11.55 FILM: To Die For (15, 1995) Black comedy starring Nicole Kidman
2.05am FILM: The Last Hard Men (15, 1976) Western starring Charlton Heston **4.00 FILM: Man in the Attic (PG, 1953)** Thriller starring Jack Palance (b/w) **5.40** Look at Life

Film4

11.00am Arizona Raiders (U, 1965) Western starring Audie Murphy **12.50pm The Wackiest Ship in the Army (U, 1960)** Second World War comedy starring Jack Lemmon **2.55 Run Silent, Run Deep (U, 1958)** Second World War drama starring Clark Gable and Burt Lancaster (b/w) (AD) **4.50 The Man in the White Suit (U, 1951)** Satirical Ealing comedy with Alec Guinness (b/w) (AD)
6.35 Sahara (12, 2005) An explorer searches for a treasure-laden American Civil War battleship believed to be somewhere in the Sahara. Adventure with Matthew McConaughey, Penélope Cruz and Steve Zahn (AD)
9.00 The Spy Who Dumped Me (15, 2018) Two friends are thrust into an international conspiracy when one of them discovers her ex is really a secret agent. Comedy starring Mila Kunis, Kate McKinnon and Gillian Anderson (AD)
11.15 The Death of Dick Long (18, 2019) Three friends gather for what is supposed to be a band practice, but tragedy strikes. Comedy starring Michael Abbott and Daniel Scheinert
1.20am-3.30 Saint Frances (15, 2019) Comedy drama starring Kelly O'Sullivan

More4

8.55am Kirstie's Handmade Treasures **9.15** A Place in the Sun **10.05** A New Life in the Sun: Where Are They Now? **11.05** Find It, Fix It, Flog It (AD) **1.10pm** Heir Hunters **2.10** Four in a Bed **4.50** Location, Location, Location **5.55** Kirstie and Phil's Love It or List It (AD)
6.55 Escape to the Château: DIY (AD)
7.55 Grand Designs. Kevin McCloud follows the progress of a musician as he sets out to build a house wrapped around an ancient oak tree in rural Suffolk (5/7) (AD)
9.00 24 Hours in A&E. A 12-year-old girl requires extensive surgery after breaking her leg while scoring a try in a rugby match (4/11) (AD)
10.00 999: What's Your Emergency? Call handlers guide the daughter of a heart attack victim through administering CPR, and a boy is coached what to do when his mother suffers a diabetic emergency while driving (3/4) (AD)
11.05 24 Hours in A&E. A 71-year-old is rushed to hospital after falling head first onto a tiled floor while doing DIY in his kitchen (10/11) (AD)
12.05am 999: On the Front Line **1.10** 8 Out of 10 Cats Does Countdown **2.15** 24 Hours in A&E (AD) **3.20-3.50** Food Unwrapped (AD)

ITV2

6.00am World's Funniest Videos **6.35** Totally Bonkers Guinness World Records **7.00** Love Bites (AD, SL) **8.00** Dress to Impress **9.00** Chuck **10.00** One Tree Hill **11.00** The O.C. **12.00** Love Bites (AD) **1.00pm** Dress to Impress **2.00** Supermarket Sweep **3.05** Chuck **4.00** One Tree Hill. Karen confronts Dan **5.00** The O.C.
6.00 Celebrity Catchphrase (AD)
7.00 Ninja Warrior UK. Rickie Williams, Melvin Odoom and Laura Crane take part (AD)
8.00 Superstore. Amy brings her daughter to work when she finds herself without a babysitter, while Dina chases a shoplifter (AD)
8.30 Superstore. A secret shopper visits the store. Comedy starring America Ferrera (AD)
9.00 Loaded in Paradise. Reality series
10.00 Family Guy. Peter is grounded (AD)
10.30 Family Guy. Peter causes a fight (AD)
11.00 Family Guy. Animated comedy (AD)
11.30 American Dad! (AD)
12.00 American Dad! (AD) **12.30am** Superstore (AD) **1.30** Hey Tracey! Hosted by Joel Dommett **2.15** Totally Bonkers Guinness World Records (SL) **2.40** Unwind with ITV **3.00** Teleshopping

ITV3

6.00am Classic Emmerdale **7.00** Classic Coronation Street (AD) **8.05** Man About the House **9.05** Where the Heart Is (AD) **11.15** Agatha Christie's Poirot (AD) **12.25pm** Heartbeat (AD) **1.25** Classic Emmerdale **2.35** Classic Coronation Street (AD) **3.35** Midsomer Murders (AD) **5.35** Downton Abbey (AD)
7.05 Heartbeat. Blaketon is abducted by an old Army friend whose experiences in a Japanese PoW camp have taken their toll, and Greengrass is fleeced by a pair of con-men (AD)
8.00 Vera. DCI Vera Stanhope investigates the case of a murdered entrepreneur whose legacy of unpaid debts and ruined lives leaves no shortage of suspects (1/4) (AD)
10.00 Blue Murder. Janine investigates when a man newly released from prison is strangled with a dog chain — and ends up with an entire family confessing to the crime (3/4) (AD)
11.35 Wycliffe. A schoolgirl is found dead after a disco. Drama starring Jack Shepherd (6/8)
12.40am Where the Heart Is. Luke leaves hospital (AD) **1.45** Man About the House **2.20** Unwind with ITV **2.30** Teleshopping

ITV4

6.00am The Protectors **6.35** Cadfael **8.05** Magnum, PI **9.10** The Professionals (AD) **10.20** Minder (AD) **11.25** Dempsey and Makepeace (AD) **12.25pm** The Best of the 70s **12.45** Live Snooker: Tour Championship. Coverage of day four, featuring the opening session of the concluding quarter-final, held at Bonus Arena in Hull **4.15** The Derby Through the Years **4.30** The Professionals (AD) **5.35** Minder (AD)
6.45 Live Snooker: Tour Championship. Coverage of the evening session on day four, featuring the final session of the concluding quarter-final, held at Bonus Arena in Hull
10.15 FILM: Rambo (18, 2008) The one-man army travels to Burma to rescue a party of missionaries from a sadistic military officer. Action sequel directed by and starring Sylvester Stallone, with Julie Benz and Graham McTavish
11.55 The Sweeney. An apparently respected gynaecologist's suitcase is stolen, but he is reluctant to reveal its contents
1.00am Dempsey and Makepeace (AD) **2.10** The Protectors **2.45** Unwind with ITV **3.00** Teleshopping. Home shopping

Drama

6.00am Teleshopping **7.30** Birds of a Feather **8.00** The Brittas Empire **8.40** Keeping Up Appearances (AD) **9.15** Classic Holby City **10.35** Casualty **11.40** The Bill **12.40pm** Classic EastEnders **2.00** Howards' Way **3.05** Lovejoy **4.10** Peak Practice **5.20** The Brittas Empire
6.00 Keeping Up Appearances (AD)
6.40 Last of the Summer Wine (AD)
7.20 Last of the Summer Wine. Foggy devises an assault course, but Clegg stays out of it
8.00 Shakespeare & Hathaway: Private Investigators. Comedy drama about an oddball pair of private detectives who investigate crime in Stratford-upon-Avon, starring Mark Benton and Jo Joyner (AD)
9.00 Annika. New series. A new DI and her team are called in to solve the murder of a man found in the Clyde. Nicola Walker stars (1/6) (AD)
10.00 New Tricks. The squad reinvestigates the disappearance of a political activist (6/8) (AD)
11.20 Cutting It. The Henshall hair salon prepares to reopen once more (1/6)
12.40am Bad Girls **2.10** Lovejoy **2.55** Classic Holby City (SL) **4.00** Teleshopping

Yesterday

6.00am Train Truckers **7.10** Impossible Railways (AD) **8.00** Abandoned Engineering (AD) **9.00** War Factories **10.00** The World at War **11.00** Billy Connolly's Great American Trail **12.00** Great British Railway Journeys **2.00pm** Bangers and Cash **4.00** War Factories **5.00** The World at War. The liberation of Paris in 1944
6.00 Great British Railway Journeys. Michael Portillo visits Hadrian's Wall
6.30 Great British Railway Journeys. A visit to the nuclear reprocessing site at Sellafield
7.00 Billy Connolly's Great American Trail. The comedian visits Kearny, New Jersey
8.00 Bangers and Cash. A vivid Dutch DAF 66 lands at the North Yorkshire showroom (AD)
9.00 Hornby: A Model World. Company staff, enthusiasts and famous faces pick their top 10 products and innovations (11/11) (AD)
10.00 Bangers and Cash. A collection of five iconic cars arrives at Thornton le Dale (3/8)
11.00 Abandoned Engineering (6/8) (AD)
12.00 Bangers and Cash. A Morgan sports car (AD) **1.00am** Train Truckers **2.00** Impossible Railways (AD) **3.00** Teleshopping

MindGames

Tetonor Fiendish No 348

12	13	14	15
16	60	50	17
29	40	30	27
48	19	36	54

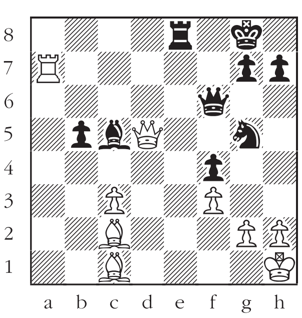
			2	3			6	6	8			15			

When complete, the strip below the grid can be split into eight pairs of numbers. Adding the numbers in a pair gives one of the 16 numbers in the grid. Multiplying them gives a different number in the grid. For example, a 4 and 6 in the strip could be paired to make 10 (4+6) and 24 (4x6) in the grid. Enter each sum below the corresponding number in the grid. The blanks in the strip must be deduced, bearing in mind the numbers are listed in ascending order.

The next Tetonor puzzle will appear on Tuesday

For more puzzles, including an extra Codeword, Train Tracks and Futoshiki go to page 10

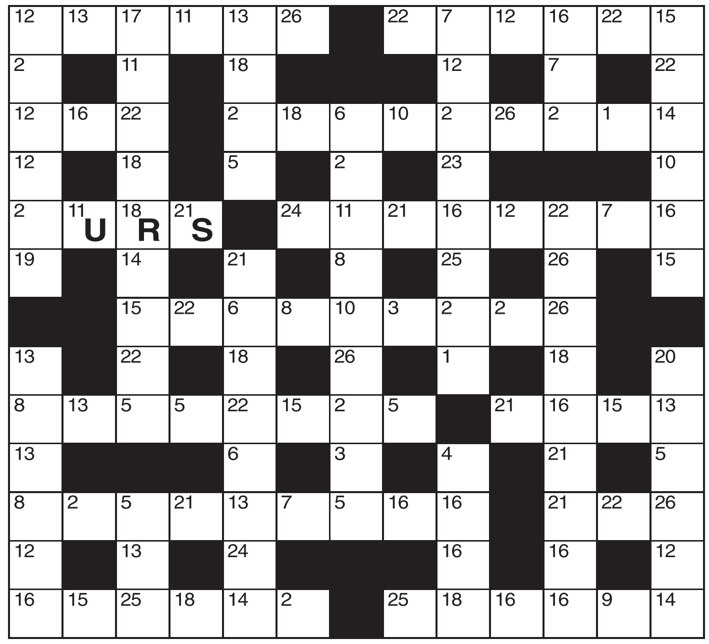
Winning Move



Black to play.
This position is from Vokhidov-Madaminov, Titled Tuesday, chess.com 2023.

As this was a blitz game, White probably played the previous move, Qd5+, without much thought. It seems obvious that Black must play either 1 ... Ne6 (when 2 Ra6 is strong) or 1 ... Qe6 (when 2 Qxc5 Qe1+ 3 Qg1 is complicated but also good for White). What has White overlooked?

Codeword No 4862



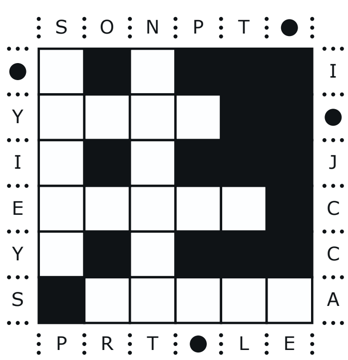
A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q ~~R~~ ~~S~~ T ~~U~~ V W X Y Z

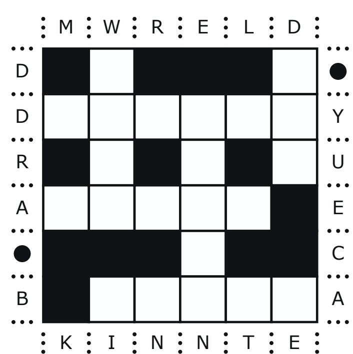
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11 U	12	13
14	15	16	17	18 R	19	20	21 S	22	23	24	25	26

Every letter in this crossword-style grid has been substituted for a number from 1 to 26. Each letter of the alphabet appears in the grid at least once. Use the letters already provided to work out the identity of further letters. Enter letters in the main grid and the smaller reference grid until all 26 letters of the alphabet have been accounted for. Proper nouns are excluded. *Yesterday's solution, right*

Cluelines **Stuck on Codeword?** To receive 4 random clues call 0901 293 6262 or text TIMECODE to 64343. Calls cost £1 plus your telephone company's network access charge. Texts cost £1 plus your standard network charge. For the full solution call 0905 757 0142. Calls cost £1 per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge. SP: Spoke, 0333 202 3390 (Mon-Fri, 9am-5.30pm).

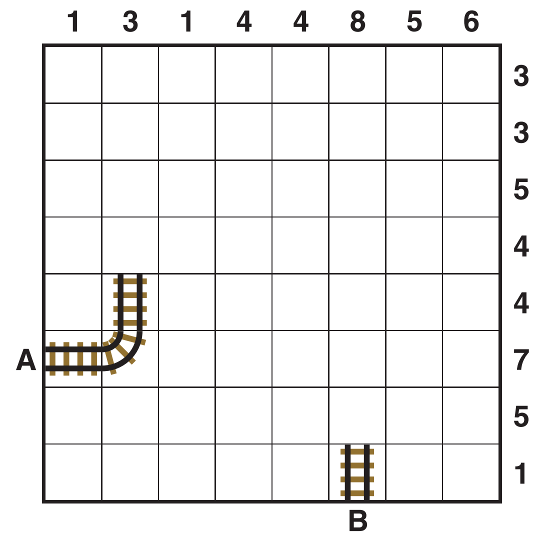
Lexica No 6807 No 6808





Slide the letters either horizontally or vertically back into the grid to produce a completed crossword. Letters are allowed to slide over other letters

Train Tracks No 1900



Lay tracks to enable the train to travel from village A to village B. The numbers indicate how many sections of rail go in each row and column. There are only straight rails and curved rails. The track cannot cross itself.

Quintagram®

Solve all five **cryptic** clues using each letter underneath once only

1 Might one be in check in game? (4)

_ _ _ _

2 Train, or an alternative means of transport (5)

_ _ _ _ _

3 Trainee wasting pounds, one who gets paid (6)

_ _ _ _ _ _

4 Tries to find food over a lengthy period (7)

_ _ _ _ _ _ _

5 Paper's first great crossword compiler, a leader (10)

_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

A	A	A	A	C	C	C	E
E	E	E	E	E	F	G	G
H	I	K	N	N	O	O	P
R	R	R	R	S	S	T	T

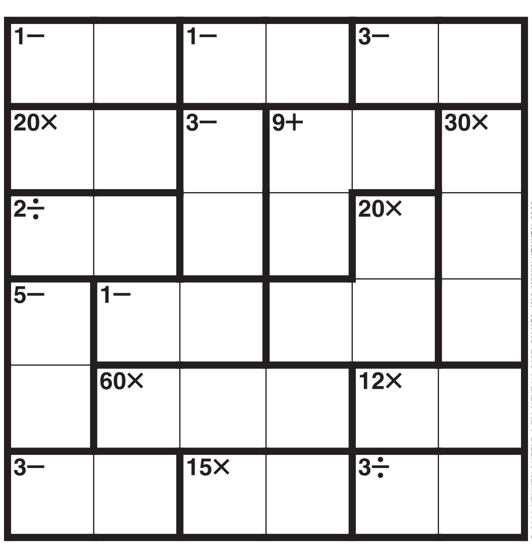
Challenge your mind with puzzle books from The Times



thetimes.co.uk/bookshop

What are your favourite puzzles in MindGames?
Email: puzzles@thetimes.co.uk

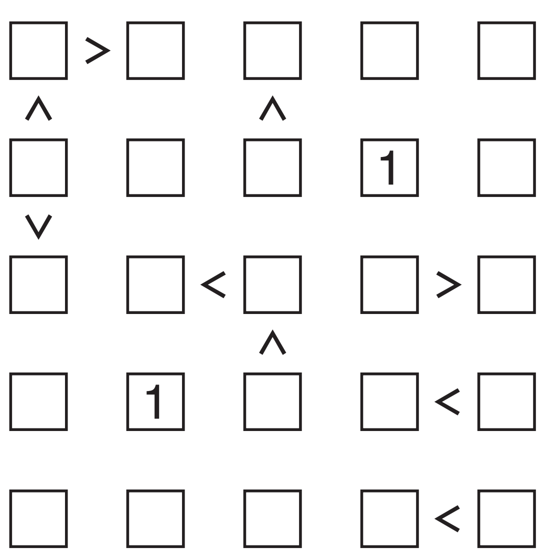
KenKen Difficult No 5854



All the digits 1 to 6 must appear in every row and column. In each thick-line "block", the target number in the top left-hand corner is calculated from the digits in all the cells in the block, using the operation indicated by the symbol.

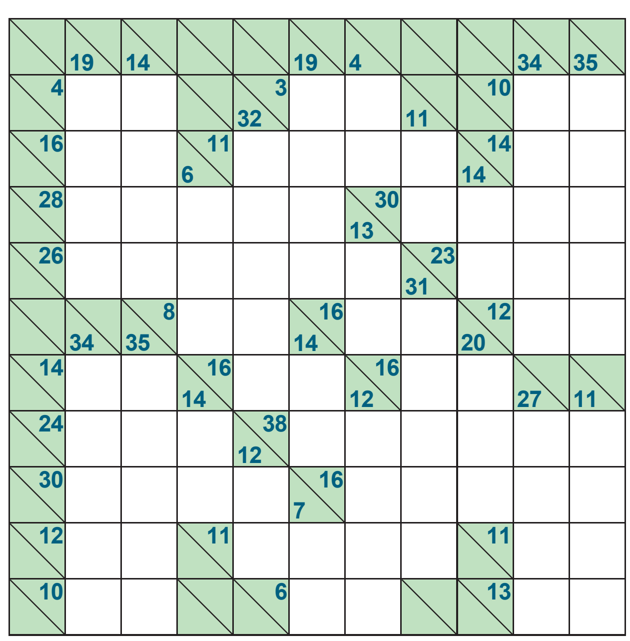
© 2010 KENKEN PUZZLE & TM NEXTOY. DIST. BY UFS, INC. WWW.KENKEN.COM

Futoshiki No 4444



Fill the blank squares so that every row and column contains each of the numbers 1 to 5 once only. The symbols between the squares indicate whether a number is larger (>) or smaller (<) than the number next to it.

Kakuro No 3403

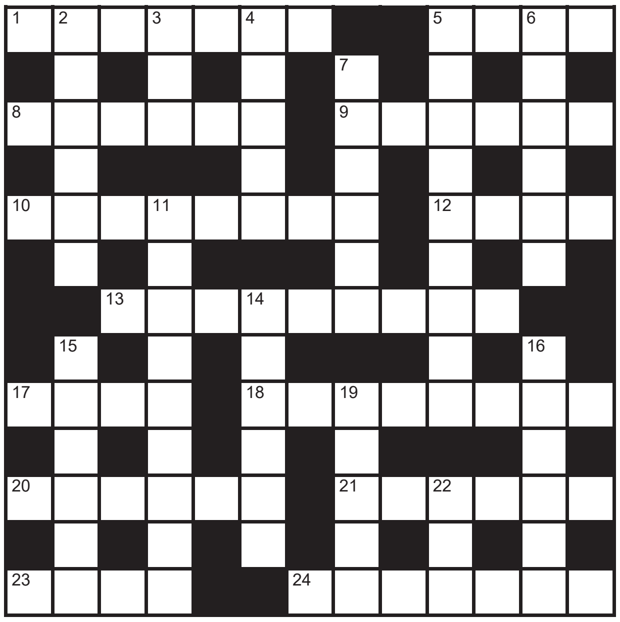


Fill the grid using the numbers 1 to 9 only. The numbers in each horizontal or vertical run of white squares add up to the total in the triangle to its left or above it. The same number may occur more than once in a row or column, but not within the same run of white squares.

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MindGames

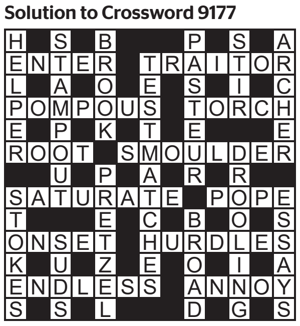
times2 Crossword No 9178



Across
1 Made (7)
5 Swear (4)
8 Small summerhouse or pavilion (6)
9 Blocked (a motion) (6)
10 Hairdresser (8)
12 Dim in one's memory (4)
13 Illness identification (9)
17 Queen of the Greek gods (4)
18 Hard Italian cheese (8)
20 Undo (6)
21 Former Japanese military leader (6)
23 Sheet of glass (4)
24 Equestrian facility (7)

Down
2 Rationality (6)
3 Playing card rank (3)
4 Conjure up (5)
5 Ignite (5,4)
6 Symptom of a cold (6)
7 Exaggerate (6)
11 Stewed meat in a thick white sauce (9)
14 Wide open (6)
15 Type of felt hat (6)
16 Central European river (6)
19 Exam taken again (5)
22 Item of regalia (3)

Solution to Crossword 9177



Need help with today's puzzle? Call 0905 757 0143 to check the answers. Calls cost £1 per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge. SP: Spoke, 0333 202 3390 (Mon-Fri 9am-5.30pm).

Bridge Andrew Robson

We return to the RAC in Pall Mall for the 2023 Lederer Memorial Trophy. Some said it was the strongest Lederer field ever. Indeed, the winning team Edmonds included perhaps the strongest player in the world, six-time world champion Michal Klukowski, still aged only 27. It was against the Kluk that I was fortunate enough to make this 6♠.

After a complex auction, West, the Kluk, led the jack of clubs. Declarer won dummy's bare king and led a spade to the jack, king and ace. My main hope (before that first round of spades) had been to pick up an ♠Ax holding (low to a picture and duck back); but it was better to lead to the king (rather than cross to hand and lead to the queen) because I could pick up some 4-1 splits that way (East with a bare jack/ten).

Declarer won West's six of hearts return with the ace. Playing for the jack of spades to be singleton as per Restricted Choice (and I thought West would duck with ♠Axx), declarer ruffed a diamond and led a spade to the eight, East discarding. I cashed the king of hearts, ruffed a second diamond (so now I had no spade in hand to finesse again), cashed the ace of clubs, discarding dummy's third heart, and led the queen of hearts.

If West was out of hearts, he would ruff and declarer would need the queen of diamonds to fall in four rounds. When West followed, declarer could lead out the long hearts. If West ruffed, declarer could overruff, draw trumps and cash the ace-king of diamonds. When West chose to discard, declarer could reach a two-card ending where West's last two cards were were ♠107 and dummy's were ♠Q9. West's spades were "couped" and that was slam made. Lucky boy.

Dealer: South, Vulnerability: Both

Teams | Advanced

North: ♠Q983 ♥AK2 ♦AKJ75 ♣K
West: ♠A1074 ♥J106 ♦Q86 ♣J102
East: ♠J ♥84 ♦109432 ♣Q7543
South: ♠K652 ♥Q9753 ♦- ♣A986

S(AR)	W(Klukowski)	N(Allfrey)	E
Pass	Pass	1♦	Pass
1♥	Pass	1NT(1)	Pass
2♣(2)	Pass	2♥(3)	Pass
2♠	Pass	3♠(4)	Pass
4♣(5)	Pass	4♦(5)	Pass
4♥(6)	Pass	5NT(7)	Pass
6♠(8)	End		

(1) Gazilli — any hand with 16 or more points.
(2) Artificial, eight or more points, game-forcing.
(3) Showing three hearts
(4) Showing four spades, so 4♠ 3♥ 5♦ 1♣.
(5) Control bids.
(6) Last train.
(7) Pick a slam.
(8) As usual, preferring a 4-4 fit to a 5-3 fit, although Alexander Allfrey's clever 5NT bid suggests that 6♥ may be better — the inference being he has weak spades. Fortunately, we did not play 6♥, defeated by ace and another spade, ruffed.

Don't worry if this auction is a bridge too far. Acol players may bid 1♦-1♥-2♠-3♠-4NT-5♥-6♠ — not that 6♠ is very good.

Contract: 6♠, Opening Lead: ♣J

andrew.robson@thetimes.co.uk

Brain Trainer

EASY 37	x 2	+ 12	50% OF IT	+ 5	25% OF IT	x 7	5/12 OF IT	x 3	÷ 15	ANSWER
MEDIUM 104	+ 76	90% OF IT	+ 73	x 3	+ 57	5/6 OF IT	+ 79	5/7 OF IT	30% OF IT	ANSWER
HARDER 186	x 6	+1/2 OF IT	x 3	+ 876	+1/2 OF IT	− 765	5/6 OF IT	− 239	+1/4 OF IT	ANSWER

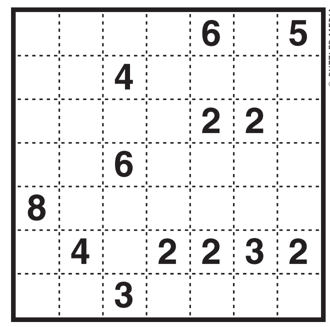
Polygon



From these letters, make words of **four** or more letters, always including the central letter. Answers must be in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, excluding capitalised words, plurals, conjugated verbs (past tense etc), adverbs ending in LY, comparatives and superlatives.
How you rate 10 words, average; 14, good; 21, very good; 29, excellent

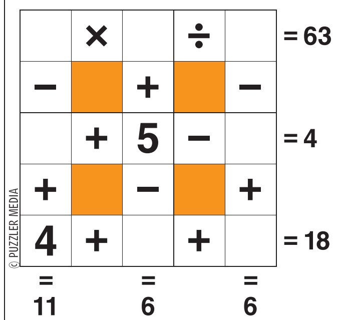
Yesterday's answers
airbrush, arris, bash, bias, bish, brash, bris, brush, bursa, bursar, bush, hubris, rash, rusa, rush, sahib, sari, shirr, shiur, shrub, shura, sirrah, sura, surah, surahi, urbs

Cell Blocks No 4745



Divide the grid into square or rectangular blocks, each containing one digit only. Every block must contain the number of cells indicated by the digit inside it.

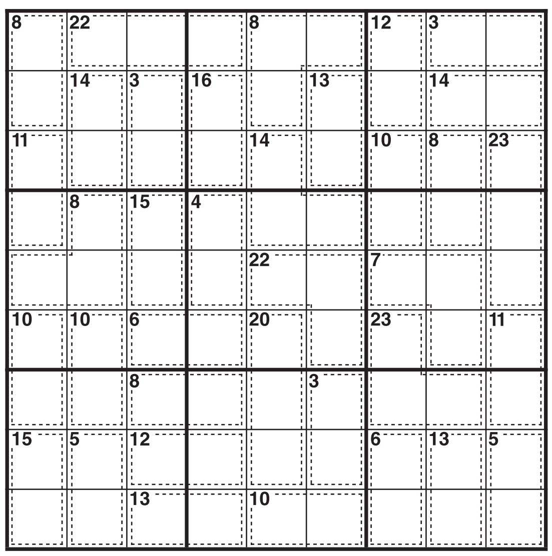
Set Square No 3406



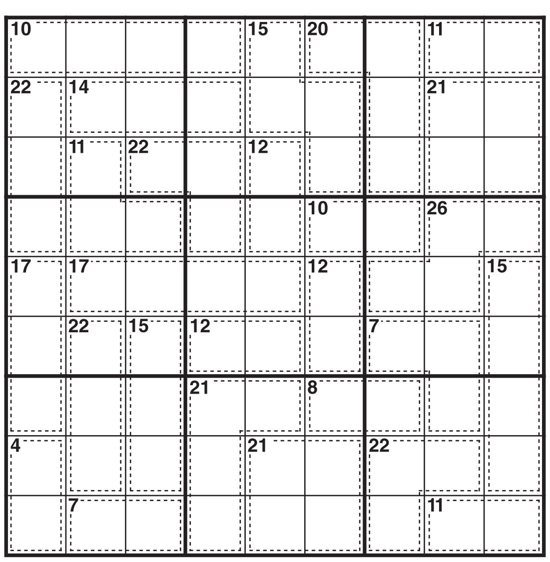
Enter each of the numbers from 1 to 9 in the grid, so that the six sums work. We've placed two numbers to get you started. Each sum should be calculated left to right or top to bottom.

Please note, BODMAS does not apply

Killer Gentle No 8804



Killer Tough No 8805

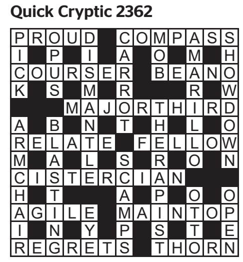


As with standard Sudoku, fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. Each set of cells joined by dotted lines must add up to the target number in its top-left corner. Within each set of cells joined by dotted lines, a digit cannot be repeated.

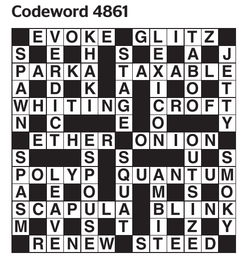
Cluelines Stuck on Sudoku, Killer or KenKen? Call 0901 293 6263 before midnight to receive four clues for any of today's puzzles. Calls cost £1 plus your telephone company's network access charge. SP: Spoke, 0333 202 3390 (Mon-Fri 9am-5.30pm).

Solutions

Quick Cryptic 2362



Codeword 4861



Kakuro 3402

8	9	7			3	1		9	7
6	8	9	7	3	4	5		8	9
	6	8	9	1		9	7	6	8
	2	6				8	9		
2	1	5	9	8	6	7		6	7
1	3		4	3	1	2	7	5	9
		2	5				4	3	
2	4	1	3		2	1	9	7	
1	2		2	4	1	3	8	9	7
3	1		1	3			6	8	9

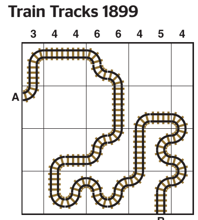
Sudoku 13,935

9	7	8	5	4	2	1	3	6
1	3	4	9	7	6	2	8	5
2	5	6	3	8	1	9	4	7
6	8	7	4	5	9	3	2	1
5	2	3	6	1	8	7	9	4
4	1	9	2	3	7	5	6	8
7	4	1	8	2	3	6	5	9
3	6	5	1	9	4	8	7	2
8	9	2	7	6	5	4	1	3

Concise Quintagram
1 Joy
2 Autumn
3 Skylark
4 West wind
5 Solitude

Cryptic Quintagram
1 King
2 Coach
3 Earner
4 Forages
5 Pacesetter

Train Tracks 1899

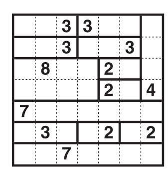


Brain Trainer
Easy 7; Medium 153; Harder 8,120

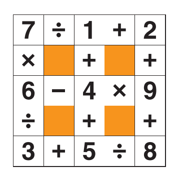
Sudoku 13,936

3	4	5	6	2	1	9	8	7
1	2	8	7	9	4	5	3	6
7	6	9	8	5	3	1	4	2
2	5	1	9	3	7	8	6	4
8	9	3	5	4	6	2	7	1
4	7	6	1	8	2	3	5	9
6	8	7	3	1	9	4	2	5
9	3	4	2	6	5	7	1	8
5	1	2	4	7	8	6	9	3

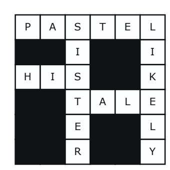
Cell Blocks 4744



Set Square 3405



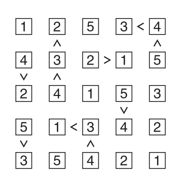
Lexica 6805



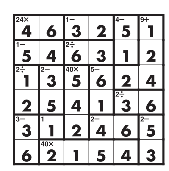
Sudoku 13,937

3	1	6	9	2	7	5	4	8
7	4	8	6	3	5	9	2	1
9	2	5	4	1	8	7	3	6
2	5	4	8	6	1	3	7	9
8	9	7	2	4	3	1	6	5
6	3	1	7	5	9	2	8	4
5	8	2	3	9	6	4	1	7
4	6	9	1	7	2	8	5	3
1	7	3	5	8	4	6	9	2

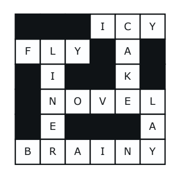
Futoshiki 4443



KenKen 5853



Lexica 6806



Killer 8802

5	8	2	9	1	4	7	3	6
1	6	7	2	5	3	4	8	9
3	9	4	8	7	6	5	1	2
9	4	5	3	2	7	1	6	8
8	7	6	4	9	1	3	2	5
2	3	1	5	6	8	9	7	4
4	2	3	1	8	5	6	9	7
6	1	9	7	4	2	8	5	3
7	5	8	6	3	9	2	4	1

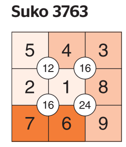
Chess — Winning Move
The unexpected 1 ... Qf7! wins at once. The main points are 2 Rxf7 Re1 mate and 2 Qxc5 Re1+ 3 Qg1 Rxg1+ 4 Kxg1 Qxa7+ with an overwhelming material advantage. White tried 2 Be4 Bxa7 3 Qxg5 but after 3 ... Qc4 Black won quickly

Word watch
Walty (c) (Of a ship) unsteady (*Collins*)
Yogh (a) A Middle English letter (*Chambers*)
Bukshi (a) An army paymaster (*OED*)

Killer 8803

1	3	6	8	7	5	9	4	2
4	2	9	1	3	6	7	5	8
7	8	5	9	2	4	3	6	1
9	1	4	5	8	7	2	3	6
5	6	3	4	9	2	1	8	7
2	7	8	6	1	3	4	9	5
6	9	2	7	4	8	5	1	3
8	4	7	3	5	1	6	2	9
3	5	1	2	6	9	8	7	4

Suko 3763



Quiz
1 The Two Ronnies **2** Diabetes or diabetes mellitus **3** Aqua **4** Income tax **5** Atlas **6** Glorious Revolution **7** Absolute Radio **8** UBS **9** Irvine Welsh **10** Alabama **11** John Lobb **12** Hakeem Jeffries **13** Anthony Davis **14** Fallon Sherrock **15** Tartufo

THE TIMES

30.03.23

MindGames

For extra puzzles
See page 10

Word watch
David Parfitt

Walty
a An early animated film
b Defective
c (Of a ship) unsteady

Yogh
a A Middle English letter
b A teacher of meditation techniques
c A by-product of milk fermentation

Bukshi
a An army paymaster
b A Chinese variety of cabbage
c A type of patent leather

Answers on page 15

Sudoku

Mild No 13,938

		4			8	1	6	5
	5		3					4
								8
		1				4	7	
	8				5		2	
	6		9					1
	9		8	4				7
	7	8	2			6	5	

Fiendish No 13,939

				1				
			6		5			
	6		2		8		5	
	8			4			7	
			5		9			
		5	7	2	3	1		
8		3				4		7
9								8
	5		8		2		9	

Super fiendish No 13,940

							1	
		8		3		2	9	7
4			8				6	
	2			7				
9			3		1		2	
	7			8		1		
	4						5	
	5	6	1		7			
				2		4		

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Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.

The Times Daily Quiz
Olav Bjortomt

1 TV's *Not the Nine O'Clock News* parodied which comedy duo as "The Two Ninnies"?

2 The drug Ozempic is used to treat patients with the type 2 form of which disorder?

3 The Ava Max song *Not Your Barbie Girl* samples a 1997 No 1 by which Danish-Norwegian group?

4 In his budget of December 1798, Pitt the Younger introduced which tax on personal wealth?

5 In Greek myth, which Titan was condemned to hold up the sky after the Titanomachy?

MOFLES/GETTY IMAGES



15

6 The Battle of Reading and the Wincanton Skirmish both took place in 1688 during which revolution?

7 Dave Berry currently hosts the breakfast show on which radio station?

8 Which Swiss bank has agreed to acquire Credit Suisse in a government-brokered deal?

9 *Ecstasy: Three Tales of Chemical Romance* is a 1996 book by which Scottish writer?

10 Which US state is nicknamed the "Yellowhammer State"?

11 Which family-run bootmaker's London bespoke workshop is located at 9 St James's Street?

12 The House minority leader, which US congressman has been called the "Barack Obama of Brooklyn"?

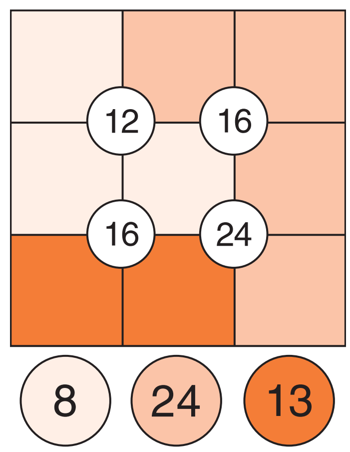
13 Who composed the operas *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X*, *Amistad* and *Wakonda's Dream*?

14 Who is the first woman to hit a nine-dart finish in a PDC event?

15 Which Italian ice cream dessert is pictured?

Answers on page 15

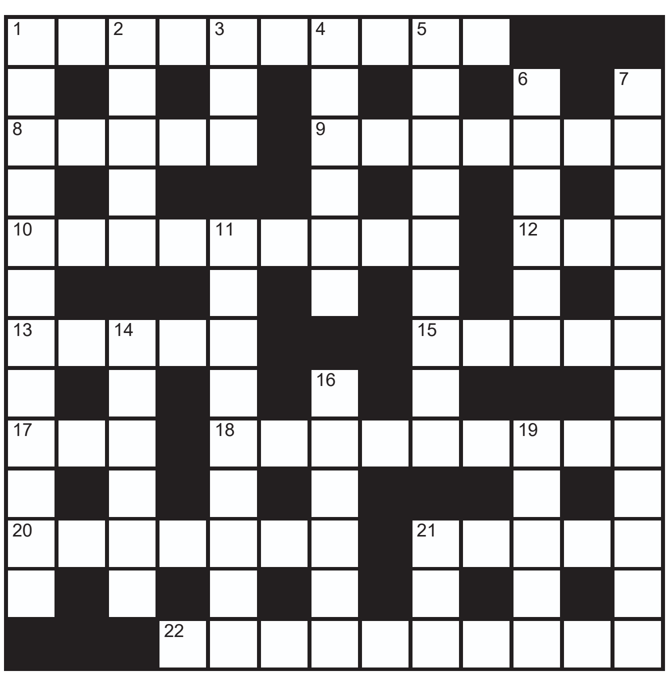
Suko
No 3763



Place the numbers 1 to 9 in the spaces so that the number in each circle is equal to the sum of the four surrounding spaces, and each colour total is correct

For interactive puzzles visit thetimes.co.uk

The Times Quick Cryptic
No 2363 by Trelawney



Across
1 Errand boy approaching artist's captivating work (4,6)
8 Foreign article contains fib (5)
9 Instant and extremely prodigious muscles (7)
10 Bad experience with chess piece — not the king, the horse! (9)
12 Teacher with unfinished virtual assistant (3)
13 Appropriate, girl getting kiss (5)
15 Vagrant with vehicle beginning to park (5)
17 Record piece of wood (3)
18 Roamed dry ground — riding this? (9)
20 Untouched piano key (7)
21 Religious leader to chatter endlessly (5)
22 One who saw European tree — it's next to a loch (10)

Down
1 Aircraft reportedly doing something impossible? It's straightforward! (5,7)*
2 Leaving some Tango in glass (5)
3 Metal roof of Tudor home (3)
4 Fresh trial about university ceremony (6)
5 Focal point of very long course cut short (9)
6 Aspire to travel around ancient land (6)
7 Cosy starship designed using this? (12)
11 Cook mixed arty stuffing? (9)
14 Nullify north-east entrance (6)
16 Go after young horse, ignoring a cow's noise (6)
19 Stroll to make a wager, losing head (5)
21 Regularly roast scoundrel (3)

Yesterday's solution on page 15

